THE FIRST WIFE



BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE GOOD EARTH

SONS

A HOUSE DIVIDED

EAST WIND : WEST WIND

THE MOTHER

THE EXILE

FIGHTING ANGEL

THE YOUNG REVOLUTIONIST

A short book written for use among young people in the churches.

IS THERE A CASE FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS ?

TRANSLATED BY PEARL BUCK

ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS

THE FIRST WIFE
AND OTHER STORIES

BY

PEARL BUCK

WITH A PREFACE BY

RICHARD J. WALSH

FOURTH EDITION



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PREFACE

ALTHOUGH by nature and choice a novelist above all else, Pearl S. Buck has written a great many shorter pieces. No one has been aware of the number and variety of these. Even the author herself had forgotten two or three which have been brought to light by earnest search, and it is by no means sure that some do not remain hidden still. For many of these writings have been in the true sense fugitive. The earliest was more than ten years ago. Several that rank with her best work came before her name had been widely noticed. Even to-day she is often to be found in obscure corners of the strange wide realm of print. If a topic is of concern to her she will write about it, in the place that seems to her most fitting, without thought of the payment or of prestige.

Her fame as a novelist has tended to draw attention away from her short stories of distinguished quality written both before and since her books were published. The present book brings together her short fiction, omitting one story not set in the Chinese scene, and omitting also certain sketches that lie on the border between fact and fiction, a border which in her field is more than usually dim and hard to fix.

The stories in the first group for the most part tell of the clash between the old and the new, between the firm traditions of the East and the urgent ideas of the West. 'The First Wife', which opens the volume, is of such length and breadth and depth that it might well have stood alone between covers as a lesser novel. Another of the longer stories, 'Repatriated', is one of

the few in which the author writes from the point of view not of a Chinese character, but of a foreigner. 'The Frill' is notable for its fine scorn of a certain type of white resident in contact with the Chinese. 'The Rainy Day', a story which first appeared in 1925, has been somewhat revised for this volume, and may be regarded as introductory to the stories of revolution.

Of the four tales of revolution which make up the second group, 'Wang Lung' is of special interest. Those who read this story when it appeared in *Asia* in September 1928, under the title 'The Revolutionist', met then the character whom so many more were to meet two and a half years later in the pages of *The Good Earth*, and they saw in vivid detail a looting scene which became the basis of a similar scene in that famous novel. When Mrs. Buck began *The Good Earth* she turned back to this story for her chief male character; indeed she wrote the novel with the name of Wang Lung in mind as title for the book, and it remained so until after the manuscript reached her publisher. Any one who wants to know how Wang Lung really looked may turn to the file of *Asia* and see the photograph of a sturdy, smiling farmer, come into the city to pedle his produce, a picture chosen by Mrs. Buck herself as the very figure of the man she put into her novel. 'Father Andrea' is another story in which the point of view is that of a non-Chinese— in this case of an Italian priest, who is a type of the Jesuit missionaries who have so long served in China. The locale of 'The New Road' is Mrs. Buck's own city, Nanking.

In the third group are four sketches of the tragic effects of the Yangtse flood in 1931. This flood swept over a cultivated area of fourteen and a half million acres and bore upon the lives of twenty-five million

farm people, as many as the whole farm population of the United States. Three of the sketches here are chosen from a set of five which were written not for sale, but to help in getting relief for victims of the disaster. Through the body known as Flood Relief in China the stories were sent gratis to newspapers in all parts of the United States, and one was read several times over the radio. There is no record of where they were printed, but they were beyond doubt the greatest single influence in raising a fund of more than two hundred thousand dollars. The final story, 'The Good River', also deals with the flood and closes the book on the appropriate note of American sympathy with China.

These last stories are perhaps the only ones which Mrs. Buck has ever written for a purpose or with intent to serve as interpreter between China and other lands. She has often said that she has no sense of mission and that she writes of China only because that is the place she happens to know best. 'My chief pleasure and interest,' she says, 'has always been people, and since I live among Chinese, then Chinese people. When I am asked what they are like I do not know. They are not this and that, but people. I cannot describe them any more than I can my own blood kin. I am too near them and have shared too closely their lives.'

Yet it seems clear that no native Chinese, however schooled in English prose, could have written of his own people as Mrs. Buck has written of them. Born in Hillsboro, West Virginia, in 1892, she drew from her American origins certain qualities that shine through her work. Her father's forebears went to America before the Revolutionary War, and her mother's somewhat later, having left Holland and Germany in quest

of religious freedom. They settled in the South, where many of her father's family, the Sydenstrickers, became distinguished in the professions. In a talk on race relations Mrs. Buck has said, 'Neither of my grandfathers, although they were landed men, and men of some wealth and position, was ever willing to buy or sell human beings. Indeed, my paternal grandfather seems at times to have been considerably persecuted because he made it a principle that he hired men irrespective of whether or not they were coloured or white, and he paid them equal wages for equal work. So from my ancestors I have the tradition of racial equality.'

Her parents, who were missionaries, had spent the year 1892 in Europe and America, after a long period of hardships in the far interior of China. So it happened that she was born in America. At the age of four months she was taken to China. There, she has said, 'I grew up much alone. My parents lived in many places, but when I was a child moved to a city on the Yangtse River called Chinkiang. There I spent my childhood very quietly in a small bungalow built on the top of a hill which overlooked the great river and the crowded city whose tiled roofs overlaid each other as closely as scales upon a fish. On the other side of our house there were low mountains and lovely gardened valleys and bamboo groves. At the foot of the hill where we lived was a big, dark temple where lived a dour old priest who used to chase me with a bamboo pole if in my wanderings I came too near the gates. I was deliciously afraid of him.'

She learned to speak Chinese before English, although when it came time to read and write she studied English rather than the difficult Chinese characters. For the first direct literary influence upon her we may

look to her Chinese nurse, whom she has herself described in an article in the *Country Gentleman*, from which I quote at length by permission:

'She is one of the two clear figures in the dimness of my early childhood. Foremost stands my mother, but close beside her, sometimes almost seeming a part of her, I see, when I look back, the blue-coated figure of my old Chinese nurse.

'She was, even at this earliest memory of her, already old. There had been other babies before me and none of us ever had any other nurse. But death had been to our house before I was born and had taken the two babies, very close together, and so when I came the old nurse received me with a tenderness which made me her own. . . .

'"And what stories can I tell, who am only an ignorant old thing and I never learned the name of a letter in my life?" the old nurse would exclaim, squinting at the toe of the perpetual stocking she held over her hand to darn.

'This remark we both knew to be merely polite, and I answered, in like terms: "You do know more stories than any woman in the world!"

'It was true she had an inexhaustible supply of tales of magic, which she had heard chiefly from Buddhist and Taoist priests. The Buddhist stories were about wonderful daggers that a man could make small enough to hide in his ear or in the corner of his eye, but which, when he fetched them out again, were long and keen and swift to kill. Or they were tales of this god and that and what they did to men. Heaven and hell she told me about, too, the horrors of the Buddhist hell, and what heaven was and what the wheel of life was

that carries us along whether we will or not. I spent many an hour lying under the bamboos, trying to think what I would like to be born into next time after I died.

'But I liked the Taoist tales better, really. They were tales of devils and fairies, and of all the spirits that live in tree and stone and cloud, and of the dragons that were in the sea and the dragons in the storm and wind. There was a pagoda towards the east and I knew there was a dragon's head pinned under there. If ever he managed to wriggle loose the river would flood and swell until we were all drowned. But there was no danger, for it was a great, strong, beautiful pagoda, and there the dragon was, imprisoned and helpless.

'Many and many a time when I was surfeited with magic I used to beg my old nurse: "Now tell me about when you were a little girl!"

'This demand I made continually upon my father and my mother, too, and from them I heard the brave stories of early pioneer days in my own country, the country I had never seen, tales of fearless undertaking, of heroic religious independence, of a stern and God-fearing morality. Now I listened with equal interest and belief to the story my old Chinese nurse told me of her childhood, and of how, in the very days when my parents were growing up in a little Christian village, going to church on Sundays, learning their catechisms, she was living in a great old Chinese city upon the Yangtse River, going to the temple to worship, having her feet bound, thinking of marriage. . . .

'"There, it is enough for to-day!" she ended suddenly. "Go and read your book now."

'This was the usual ending to any period of play or idleness, for my old nurse, although she could not read a word herself, was inordinately proud of the fact that,

although a girl, I could read as well as my brother. True, she did not consider it important until I began to go to a Chinese school and learned to read Chinese. Then she used to boast proudly to her friends: "This child of mine, although she is only a girl, has her stomach full of good Chinese characters!"

'If I dallied and complained over my book, as often I did, being an extremely wilful child, she would turn very serious and admonish me: "You *shall* learn to read! Here am I all my days like one blind, and if I want to write a letter to my son, even, I must go to the public letter-writer and he puts in so many words I did not say that I can make nothing of it even when it is written."

'But I muttered wilfully that I wished I were a little Chinese girl and need not learn, and well I knew I would like to be ignorant. At this she made her eyes so wide at me and thrust out her lower lip so far that I was awed and fell unwillingly to my book again.

'In many other ways she spoiled us badly. My mother deemed it wise that I should learn to work, and she set for me the task every day of sweeping and straightening my own room and of making my bed. My nurse muttered: "And why should this child work, seeing she is to be as learned as a boy?"

'Immediately I was comforted, knowing that the old nurse had her ways and means. So it came about that many a time when I went upstairs after breakfast to my task I found my little room spotless and my bed made and my old nurse whispered to me always: "Child, put but a little more time on your book and I am paid." . . .

'But when her old body had been laid most tenderly into its coffin and the coffin sent away to be buried

with her husband, the house was very sad for a while, and empty of a tender presence. Yet even though we grew used, and grown up, we know quite well and to this day that she left her share in us, her white children. Part of her went into us, as mothers are part of their children, so that now and for ever her country is like our own to us, loved and understood, her people our own kin. And some essence from the gods in whom she believed lingers in our hearts still, and keeps us, when we think of our old nurse, too large for disbelief, too humble for any scorn.'

The child's father went on frequent journeys into remote parts, and brought back tales of his own adventures, some of which took him close to death. And her mother talked to her for long hours, mostly about her own childhood in West Virginia, so greatly different from all that the daughter knew. 'My mother taught me everything and made alive for me music and art and beauty. Most of all did she teach me the beauty that lies in words and in what words will say. Other American children have community and school and church and all that makes their varied environment. I had my mother and missed nothing. From my earliest childhood she taught me to write down what I saw and felt, and she helped me to see beauty everywhere. Not a week passed without my giving her something to read that I had written and she was fearless, though kind, in her criticisms.'

Soon her mother began to send some of the little pieces to the *Shanghai Mercury*, an English language newspaper which had a weekly edition for children. There many of them were printed, during a period of several years, over the signature 'Novice'. There are

American writers who remember with pride their first appearances in the well-loved columns of *St. Nicholas*. Mrs. Buck's recollection is less of pride than of the prizes which the *Mercury* paid in cash and which she won so often that she came to look upon them as a regular source of spending money.

When she was fifteen she went off to boarding-school in Shanghai, her first formal schooling, and at the age of seventeen went home to America—' in spite of our living in China our mother always taught us to call America home '—to enter Randolph-Macon College. She says, ' I did not enjoy my life in college very much. It was too confined. I did not know of the life of which the girls talked so much, and my life was as remote from them as though it had been on another planet. I soon learned, however, to show myself, superficially at least, as much like them as I could, for if any heard from whence I came she would exclaim and make round eyes, and this was very irritating to me.' Nevertheless she became a leader in college, and president of her class. She wrote for the college paper and in her senior year won two literary prizes, one of which was for the best short story.

' At the end of the college life I went to my home in China to find my mother seriously ill. Two years I spent in taking care of her, finding my only recreation in long walks and in talking with my Chinese friends, but this was my pleasure.

' Then I married a young American and, my mother being recovered, we went to a town in north China where his work was, and there we lived for nearly five years.

' These five years were among the richest as well as the hardest of our life. Part of the time we were the only white people there in that town and countryside,

and at no time were there more than six of us. But my life has always been among the Chinese, and here I went about among the people and came into the closest and most intimate knowledge of their lives. As a married woman I had more freedom than I had ever had to come and go among them, and Chinese women would talk to me as woman to woman and friend to friend. Some of my best and closest friends were made in those years and I have them still.

'Outwardly our life was exciting enough. We had a famine, with all that means ; we had battles between bandits attacking the city, and bullets flew thick as flocks of birds over our little Chinese house, which clung to the inside of the city wall. Sometimes we went into the country, walking sometimes, and sometimes, if it were far, I in a sedan chair and my husband on his bicycle. We went into places where white women had never been and I furnished topic for conversation for weeks, I am sure.

'Then we came to Nanking, my husband to take the department of Rural Economics in the University of Nanking. Here life was different again. We came out of the country and from country people into student life. Here during these ten years we have watched the nation in revolution, have seen the old day defeated and the new day, struggling and weak, but living, come to birth.'

She knew always that one day she would write. But for some years she was busy with the care of her home, her children and her parents, with her strong interest in her husband's researches in Chinese farming, and with her own teaching. As part of her job as a Presbyterian missionary, she taught English literature in the

University of Nanking and in the South-eastern and later Chung Yang University.

Though there was no time to write, while her hands were occupied her mind was framing stories. In 1922 she found her first spare moments. At that time the *Atlantic* was disturbed about the younger generation. Reading some of its articles on this subject, Mrs. Buck looked about her at the young Chinese whom she knew. With her daughter playing in the room, she wrote an article and sent it to distant Boston. It was the first she had ever sent to any magazine, and the *Atlantic* lived up to its role as 'the amateur's paradise' by prompt acceptance. The article appeared under the title 'In China, Too' in the issue of January 1923. In form and manner it shows the touch of the writer of fiction. At the time only thirty years old, she cast herself in the part of an elderly woman for purpose of contrast with the young people whom she was discussing. An excerpt: 'I am rather breathless over it all, having had my main outlook on life the last quarter of a century from this quiet corner of my veranda in a little interior city of China. We are really very conservative here yet, the rare visitors from an outside world tell us. Vague rumours of co-education, of men and women dining together in restaurants, of moving pictures, and even imported dances, float in from the port cities. I know that I sometimes see the inhabitants of such places pass through the abominably ugly railway station, which has just been foisted upon our old-fashioned little old town; and they look scandalous women to me, with their wide, short trousers and short sleeves and tight coats; but I suppose I am behind the times. I confess that I like my old Chinese friends better, with their courteous speech and gracious

manners. I dislike the acquired abruptness of these young creatures. I dislike the eternal cigarettes, and the blasé, self-sufficient expression on young faces, which I am accustomed to seeing timid and reverential.'

Seeing the *Atlantic* article, the editor of the *Forum* wrote to the unknown author asking her to write something for him, and she sent a piece entitled ' Beauty in China ', which appeared in the issue of March 1924. Here are found some of her early glimpses of America: ' In such a mood as this I crossed the Atlantic, and was thrown straight into New York. Who except one accustomed to the leisurely traffic of trams and rickshaws and wheelbarrows can realize the astounding activity of New York! Where one dodged one vehicle a thousand sprang up to take its place, and crossing the street was a wild adventure, compared to which bandits in China are a mild affair. There was the bewildering clatter of elevated railways to dizzy one's mind, and subterranean roars within the yawning earth, which swallowed up people by the hundreds in one spot, only to vomit them up, restless as ever, miles away. Personally, I could not commit myself to the subway, and, clinging to a trolley-strap, thought regretfully at times of jogging peacefully along on a wheelbarrow, watching the lazy ducks swimming in the ponds by the roadside and stopping to pluck a wild flower for babies tumbling brown and naked in the dust.

' But if New York shook me out of my quiescent dreaming, even New York did not prepare me for the shock of the American woods.

' A week later I found myself walking through a wood in Virginia. How can I put the excitement of it into words! No one had told me how paganly gorgeous it would be. Oh, of course they had said, " The leaves

turn in the fall, you know," but how does that prepare one? I had thought of pale yellows and tans and faint rose reds. Instead, I found myself in a living blaze of colour,—robust, violent, vivid beyond belief. I shall never forget one tall tree-trunk wrapped about with a vine of flaming scarlet, standing outlined, a fiery sentinel against a dark rocky cliff.'

A third article, in the *Nation*, October 8th 1924, on 'The Chinese Student Mind', had some of the author's experience in teaching Chinese students: 'I stand sometimes before one of my classes of ninety-odd Chinese college students and am almost convinced that they are a band of young Gideons. I seem to see unquenchable fires in their eyes and a determination in their young faces which warms my heart, cold after so many years of contact with Oriental habits of squeeze and face-saving. I find myself repeating that old Israelitish war-cry: "Surely the Lord and the sword of Gideon can do it." . . .

'"Oh, if you can teach us this term, teach us something to make us hopeful!" cried a young woman in one of my classes in the large Government college here. It is the wistful cry of youth; a heart-breaking cry to those who hear it, for who has a right to hope if youth has not? And we who come from that West which has done so much to take away their hopefulness must give it back again in a courage strong enough for life as it must be lived in China to-day.'

In 1925 Mrs. Buck went to America with her husband on furlough and took up study at Cornell for the master's degree. Her dissertation was on the English essayists, and she won the Laura Messenger Prize in history (although herself in the English Department)

on the subject 'China and the West'. This study was so soundly built that the author was able to use a large part of the historical matter seven years later, in an address before the American Academy of Political and Social Science, at Philadelphia, April 8th 1933. This address will be found in the Annals of the Academy.

On the ship bound for America in 1925 Mrs. Buck had written the story which grew into her first novel. Of this she has told in *The Colophon*. The editors of *The Colophon* have courteously granted permission to include the article in full:

'When I began to write *East Wind: West Wind* it was certainly not with any idea in my mind that later it might be put between the covers of a book. I wrote it in mid-Pacific, in the writing-room or in odd corners of the lounge of an Empress liner. I was quite shut off from the world, for there is no more delightful privacy than the isolation of an English steamship, where each passenger fears equally speaking to or being spoken to by another, lest in such an act a fatal social mistake be made.

'In this privacy the slender tale wove itself out, my first attempt to write anything longer than a little sketch. At its conclusion at the end of about fifty pages, I put it away and did nothing more with it until some months later, when a valued friend asked with urgency why I had nothing written to show him. Ashamed of my delinquency, for he was ever urging me to write, I brought forth my story, written with the utmost illegibility upon ship's note-paper.

'After he had deciphered it, with pains, I am sure, although he was too kind to say so, he persevered until he had made me promise to type it, and then I sent it

to *Asia* magazine. It was accepted and appeared as "A Chinese Woman Speaks".

'After its publication a well-known New York publishing house wrote to me—I had then returned to China—asking me to enlarge the story into a full-length novel and offering to publish it. Meantime I had written another story, in the nature of a sequel. I examined the first story again with some interest, naturally, but I decided that to enlarge it was to put too heavy a burden upon its frail structure. It was necessarily a delicate, limited tale, because I had unconsciously chosen in the first place that very limited point of view, a young girl's mind.

'I wrote the publishers, therefore, that I could not with honesty enlarge the original story, but I offered the two stories together. This arrangement they refused.

'The manuscript lay then for a year or two in a drawer, and I forgot it until one day a man said to me of it, "Why do you not put that story of yours into a book?"

'I remembered it again, and I fetched it from its drawer, read it, and decided its chances were so slight that I could not trouble to re-type it. Nevertheless, I decided that I would send it to some literary agency and if a publisher could be found it would be well, and if not, then nothing was lost. I chose at random the names of three such agencies out of a handbook for writers I happened to have had given me. Two of the agencies replied saying they preferred to handle nothing from China, since editors and publishers were not interested at all in such material. The third agency wrote me that they would be glad to handle material dealing with China. I sent the manuscript to them

and it was accepted. I forgot it again in the series of exciting events in China. Mr. David Lloyd, my agent, will have me believe that its fortunes until it found a publisher were exciting to him. It seems to have been well read before publication, as it was on offer, Mr. Lloyd says, from one October until the next September through a period of forty-seven weeks. "Despite a prejudice," if one may quote one's agent:

'"Despite a prejudice among those who publish books and sell them, we put our best Chinese foot forward about your manuscript from the start. The original selling memorandum (a direct yet delicate portrayal of the new and the old in China) still seems to fit aptly, and foretell the spirit of its successors. For its readers, we chose successively publishers we knew were accessible to its flavour and authentic substance, and—always up to a certain point they responded to these temptations—editors of established lists, publishers later in the field but not behind in reputation. It was the sort of manuscript such men are reluctant to decline, a mental state often mistaken by inexperienced writers for an editorial affectation. In one office every one would agree that the book was delightful, in another, one convinced champion would fight for it as a thing of beauty, in a third, five or six excited judges could compose the different bases of their interest only in respect to that well-known prejudice (it was believed in, only three short years ago) against Chinese books. In the Paget agency itself we had to save our face as business men and women by conferring on the question whether to go on offering a book by Pearl S. Buck! We went on. In the forty-seventh week, on the seventh day of the month, to borrow the accent of Noah in his Ark, the book found its imprint. Richard

Walsh and his associates, perhaps not without some prayer and fasting of their own, decided to plump for it."

'We made in that year (1929), however, a hurried business trip to America, and while we were there a letter was forwarded to me from China, whither it had been sent by my agent, saying that the John Day Company had made an acceptable offer for the book and would I cable concerning certain matters. At the instant of receiving this letter I happened to be but a few hours from New York; I had so completely forgotten the whole matter that I had neglected to tell the agency of my change of continents.

'When I could, therefore, I went to New York and to the John Day offices, and found that the title I had given the manuscript, "Winds of Heaven", was not liked. We compromised, therefore, by using the sub-title. I found also, that in my effort to write English that would be usual enough to be acceptable to English-speaking people I had used a number of trite phrases, which I had remembered from English books I had read. In Chinese it is good literary style to use certain well-known phrases previously used by great writers. I now learned this is not true in English, and it is best always in writing this language to use one's own words. Therefore I went over the manuscript again, deleting the phrases I had so painfully put in.

'But it was worth the effort, for the little book made its way. Before *The Good Earth* was published, ten months later, *East Wind: West Wind* had become a successful book in its own right, and was in its third printing.

'So runs the slight story of *East Wind: West Wind*.

The book is of value to me chiefly because it gave me confidence to go on writing, since now I had found a publisher who could be interested in what I wrote, even though I, knowing nothing else well, could write only about China.'

This account has brought us to May 1930, when *East Wind: West Wind* was published in America. In the meantime, however, there had been other incidents of bibliographical interest.

Upon her return to China in the autumn of 1926 Mrs. Buck began to write constantly and in earnest. She took up as a major project the history of the Chinese novel, and she wrote what was to have been her own first novel. But in March of 1927 the Communist soldiers entered Nanking, looting and killing foreigners. By the narrow margin of ten minutes Mr. and Mrs. Buck and their children escaped. They heard the door of their house battered down. Throughout a day of terror they stayed hidden in the hut of one of their Chinese neighbours, just beyond their own garden wall. This is one of the incidents of which she has said, 'I have had that strange and terrible experience of facing death because of my colour. At those times nothing, nothing I might have done could have saved me. I could not hide my race. . . . The only reason I was not killed was because some of the others in that race knew *me*, under my skin, and risked their own lives for me.' When on the following day the members of the white colony were taken off by an American destroyer, they left behind everything except the clothes they had been wearing when the looters came. Thus was lost the completed manuscript of Mrs. Buck's first novel. When she came back, after a year spent

in Japan and in Shanghai, it was to find the house gutted by fire.

Her observation of this and other scenes of revolution is to be traced in the second group of stories in the present volume, and also in her short book *The Young Revolutionist*. The latter was written at the request of the Missionary Education Movement for use among young people in the churches and published as a minor work.

The course of *The Good Earth* is too familiar to need much reference here. Completed in 1930, it was published in 1931. It was hailed in chorus by the critics and for twenty-one months it stood on the American list of 'best-sellers', a record made by no other book since *Quo Vadis*, thirty-five years earlier. It was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for the best novel of its year by an American author. The sequel, *Sons*, has been characterized by William Lyon Phelps as 'one of the outstanding works of our time'.

In addition to her stories she has contributed important articles to various magazines. In *The Saturday Evening Post* (April 22nd 1933) she described the Chinese war-lords, on the basis of personal acquaintance; in the *Yale Review* of April 1932 she gave a searching analysis of 'The Foreign Chinese'; and in the *Cosmopolitan* (May 1932) a bold and loyal treatment of the conflict between China and Japan, entitled 'China the Unconquerable'.

Upon her arrival in America in July 1932, for the first time in nearly three years, Mrs. Buck found herself in demand among editors. She was also called upon for various addresses, some of which have come to publication. One of these, given before an audience of Negroes in Harlem, in December 1932, was a deeply

moving discussion of race relations and race pride. At its conclusion Mrs. Buck, with simple generosity, handed the manuscript as a gift to the editor of *Opportunity*, the journal of Negro life. Published there, it has also been reprinted in a leaflet.

Her address before a large body of Presbyterian women in New York on November 2nd 1932 has been given permanent form as a pamphlet entitled *Is There a Case for Foreign Missions?* Attacks upon Mrs. Buck's doctrinal beliefs as set forth in this address led to the acceptance by the Presbyterian Board of her resignation as a Missionary.

She now gives her whole time to writing and research. Her fourth novel, *The Mother*, has been completed. She has also finished her largest single undertaking, the translation of one of China's most famous novels, *Shui Hu Chüan*, to which she has given the English title, *All Men are Brothers*. This translation was an outgrowth of her study in the history of the Chinese novel. Beginning in Shanghai in the autumn of 1927, she worked upon it almost daily for four and a half years. During these years she has kept a routine of spending the morning hours at her original writing, and the afternoons in research and translation. Like every sincere scholar, she feels the need of working with a continuous interest at a long project, of a certain steadiness of purpose. Therefore she has now taken up once again her history of the Chinese novel, which will probably occupy her for some years to come.

Yet we must end, as we began, with the recollection that however devoted in scholarship, however skilled in the art of the short story, she thinks of herself as above all a novelist. And so perhaps she will forgive

me for closing this preface, which has already drawn so heavily upon her own words, with a quotation from her remarks about the craft, as made in a lecture at the Columbia School of Journalism :

' I do not consider either writing or reading novels one of the necessities of life. Millions of people in China, at least, exist intelligently and happily without reading novels and certainly without writing them, and I have the greatest admiration and respect for such persons and even at times the greatest of envy.

' For I must confess that I happen to be a somewhat peculiar person, not at all to be taken as typical of human beings in general, and certainly not desirable as an average, because the truth is I cannot be happy without writing novels, quite irrespective of whether they are read or not. I am, I regret to say, one of those unfortunate creatures who cannot function completely unless he is writing, has written, or is about to write, a novel. . . .

' Never, if you can possibly help it, write a novel. It is, in the first place, a thoroughly unsocial act. It makes one obnoxious to one's family and to one's friends. One sits about for many weeks, months, even years, in the worst cases, in a state of stupefaction. Even when from sheer exasperation and exhaustion one lays down one's pen, the wicked work goes on in one's brain. The people there will go on living and talking and thinking, until one longs, like Alice in Wonderland, to cry out, " You are only a pack of cards after all ! " and so brush them away and wake from the dream to find only leaves gently falling upon one's face ; wake again to real life and people.

' For the man or woman obsessed by these dream

people can never be a very happy person. He lives a thousand lives besides his own, suffers a thousand agonies as really as though they were what is called actual, and he dies again and again. He is doomed to be possessed by spirits until he cannot tell what is himself, what are his real soul and mind. He is thrall to a thousand masters. He is exhausted bodily and spiritually by creatures alive and working through his being, using his one body, his one mind, to express their separate selves, so that his one poor frame must be the means of all those living energies. It is no wonder that much of his time he sits bemused, silent and spent.

'If you would be yourself, therefore, free and unpossessed, never begin to be a novelist.'

On the matter of personal freedom the author herself is alone competent to speak. Certainly the world at large has passed its judgment that the creation of Mrs. Buck's novels, and of her shorter fiction as well, far from being unsocial, has been a social act of a high order. Few modern writers have done so much to further the common understanding of the human heart.

RICHARD J. WALSH

OLD AND NEW

THE FIRST WIFE

THIS was the day on which the tea merchant, whose surname was Li, expected his only son home from foreign parts. Seven years the young man had been away, and now here in his home they were awaiting him, his father, his mother, his wife, his son and daughter. Seven years these all had not seen him, and each in his own way longed for the hour when the young man might arrive. The exact time when he would come could not be known, since this town where they lived was not on the coast nor near any place where the railway ran. It was a small, quiet city in the midst of a wide plain where farms were set closely beside a slow and shallow river. On both sides of this plain mountain ranges rose, at first gently in foot-hills, and then abruptly to high and misty crests. Upon these foot-hills were planted the thousands of tea-bushes which made the region famous for its tea.

In winter the river was very low, and the people were quite cut off from every part of the world—except such travellers as came on horseback or by wheelbarrow over the rough country roads. But this was now the end of summer; abundant rains had fallen, and the river ran high enough for small junks to come up from the coast a hundred miles away. It was on such a craft that the tea merchant expected his son. Even so, the hour could not be known, since all depended on winds and on the tide that filled the lower reaches of the river near the sea; nevertheless, it was probable that he would come at some time in the late afternoon or evening of this day. Yet, lest there should be

unexpected winds and his travel be quicker than they thought, they had all dressed themselves early in the day and for hours had sat waiting.

There the old father sat, a gentle old man of the town, who had inherited from his forefathers much of the good rolling land to the south where the best tea grew, and he had the tea-shop as well, where for hundreds of years the same great square pewter tea-canisters had stood on shelves, each with its own tea. He was a man respected and listened to if he spoke where men were. He sat now in his accustomed seat to the right of the table placed in the centre against the inner wall of the central room of this house. To-day, because his only son returned, he wore his best robe of a deep plum-coloured satin and a sleeved black satin jacket, flowered in an old-fashioned circular design. He was thin and pale with the pallor that opium gives, and it is quite true that the tea merchant had smoked opium ever since he had been a young man, not heavily nor greedily, as coarse men will, but a little at a certain hour every day, delicately mixed, and only the same amount, unless he had a pain of some sort, when he allowed himself a little more. Thus opium had not made him sere and emaciated, but it had only hollowed slightly his temples and cheeks and had taken every ounce of superfluous flesh from his bones and had yellowed his skin softly and smoothly.

Across from the seat in which he was, his wife sat, the mother of his only son. She had had four children, but there was only this one left, the youngest one of all, whom they loved surpassingly. It would not have occurred to the old lady that her son could have been refused anything. This would not have been fitting, and anything unfitting would have been impossible to

her. At the same time she was possessed of some temper, as could be seen from her very black and piercing eyes, and, if she yielded to her husband or to her son, it was not always without some struggle. Nevertheless, at this moment, as she sat in a chair exactly like her husband's except that it was in a place lower than his, she sat in the properest silence of wife before husband, as one who does not speak first. An old servant, almost as old as the lady herself, stood to one side and held a brass water-pipe in her hand for her mistress. When her mistress lifted her hand, the old servant blew into flame a brown-paper spill she had, and with it she lighted the tiny ball of tobacco she had already rolled and thrust into the bowl of the brass pipe, and then she handed the pipe to the old lady. The old lady took two puffs each time, and then she gave the pipe back to the servant, who prepared it again in the same way, without sound or weariness. If a little ash fell upon her mistress's grey satin coat, the servant brushed it away most carefully with her shrivelled old finger.

In a lower seat, below the old lady, sat the daughter-in-law of this pair and wife of their only son. She was a woman less than thirty years of age, a woman neither pretty nor ugly, with small, neat, regular features and exceedingly beautiful hands; in her hands she now held a piece of pale-pink satin on which she was embroidering very minute crimson flowers and a small green bird on a bough. Every now and again she bent to whisper to a little girl, some ten years or so of age, who sat on a stool beside her, also embroidering, but slowly and painstakingly, upon a piece of cotton cloth. Every now and again this little girl looked with longing out into the court, where a robust lad of seven played

with a little white kid. His long robe of bright peacock-blue silk was caught up under his scarlet sash so that he could have greater freedom of movement. He was teasing the kid, laughing and holding out a handful of grass to it, and, when the kid, still clumsy upon its high legs, tottered towards the grass, the lad jumped back and then shouted with laughter to see the kid's idiotic amazement. At every burst of this laughter the little girl looked up and smiled longingly, and each time her mother said in a low voice, 'My child, attend to what you do.' The mother's feet and the grand-mother's feet were bound into tiny flowered satin shoes, but the little girl's feet were left free, since the child's father had written it must be so.

Yet in this quiet room that appeared so peaceful this mid-afternoon there was no peace at all, but only intense waiting, the father and the mother for the son whom they had not seen all those years, the wife for her husband. Each waited in his own way. The father sat with his eyes fixed on the romping boy, but the stillness of his face showed that in his mind there was no thought now of the child. The old mother turned to the servant and said, 'Did you tell the manservant to buy duck for the meal to-night?'

The wife looked up quickly and said in a soft, even voice, 'I have seen to it, my mother, that there is everything he likes best.'

Then, seeing that the old lady's tea-bowl was empty, she rose and felt the porcelain pot on the table to find out if it were hot, and then she poured out tea and presented it with both hands to the old lady and emptied the chilled tea from the old gentleman's bowl and poured hot tea in freshly. Then she sat down again to her embroidery.

No one could have seen from the steadiness of her lovely hands nor from the serene folding of her small lips that she was in any inner excitement. No, she sat there in the afternoon light that fell upon her from the open door, so quiet that she seemed too still, her face smooth and colourless. Even her satin coat was of a blue so pale it seemed grey. But her eyebrows were beautifully marked against her pale skin, shaped like two narrow willow leaves set there in black above her black eyes, and her black hair was oiled and smoothed back immaculately into a round, netted knot at the back, through which she had thrust a plain gold pin to hold it firm. She wore very small plain gold ear-rings also, and her ears showed small and precisely set against her head. From time to time she moistened her lips with the tip of her tongue, very slightly and delicately.

Once, when the boy slipped and fell in the court and lay waiting to be picked up, his face all puckered with weeping, she rose quickly and went out and helped him to his feet and dusted off his garments. At this moment her face could be seen to change in small ways, and she held the child a moment to her and said in her even voice:

'Do not cry. Your father will be here at any moment, and what a thing it would be if he came in and saw you crying! Why, you were but a month old when he left and you were crying then, too, and he will think you have cried the whole seven years he has been away!'

The boy began to laugh at this in the midst of his weeping and rubbed his sleeve across his eyes, and she took a kerchief she had in her bosom and wiped his eyes for him and led him into the room where the others

were and gave him a drink of tea. The old gentleman looked at the lad and smoothed down his scanty beard, smiling a little, and he said in the gentle way he had:

'My son will be pleased with you, my daughter, for such a son as this you have for him, and be sure we shall tell him everything of what you have been to us, the best and kindest daughter and the carefullest of mothers, and everything a daughter-in-law should be in the house. A good day it was for us all when we betrothed and wed you to our son, although we did not know how good then.'

'But we knew her family was a good gentry family in the country,' said the old lady quickly. 'I always said I would have a maid from a good landed family for him and not one of these townswomen who are so proud and wilful. No, I came myself from a good landed family in a market village, and they are the best, and their girls are the best taught of any.'

'That I know who have been wed to you these thirty-five years and more,' said the old gentleman, smiling; 'and the only fault you have had is that you did not keep all your children alive, and I do not blame you for this, either, since there is an end to every life, some soon, some late, and we can do nothing to mend it when the time has come for each of us that has been fixed by destiny.'

The old lady sighed and she answered, 'But the youngest one was the best of them all, and he has lived and has had such honours as would in the old days have bought him a governor's place. But I do not know what these new days are.'

'My son Yuan will not need to fear,' replied the old gentleman with certainty and pride. 'With all his

learning he need not fear anything. East and West, he has it all.'

No sooner had he said this than they all heard a voice at the gate and the commotion of men carrying boxes and loads. The voice was that of the old man-servant whom they had sent to meet Yuan. Then another voice came, the one they knew and for which they listened, but deeper, too, than they remembered and somehow strange.

'Ah, I am home!'

The old gentleman, hearing this voice, rose, and then, remembering what was fitting, he sat down again and waited. The old lady folded her hands tightly upon her lap. The young wife called quickly to her daughter, and, rising, took her position just behind her mother-in-law, and the little boy was suddenly frightened and ran in and clung to his mother's hand. The little girl stood with her sewing still in her hands, her eyes wide and shining and fixed upon the gate. But the young wife did not look up at all. She fastened her eyes steadfastly upon a crack between the tiles of the floor and stood motionless.

Then the gate opened suddenly, and she heard him come in—very hard, firm footsteps. He was wearing some sort of leathern shoes. His feet clattered upon the flagged courtyard. He came nearer, into the very door of the room. He had come to his father. Out of the corners of her eyes the young wife could see the old gentleman rise, and she heard the young man, her husband, cry out, 'My father, my father.'

'After seven years——' said the old gentleman, and suddenly his voice cracked, and he began to weep a little.

'Sit down, my father,' said the young man, and,

laughing unsteadily, he poured out a cup of tea for his father. 'I am home again from across the seas—your son, safe and well, home again! My mother, here I am!'

The old lady rose trembling and laid her hand wonderingly upon her son's arm. 'But, Yuan, my son, you seem taller,' she said. 'You look strange to me, you look so much older.'

'Seven years do not leave any of us the same,' said Yuan in his quick, clear way, and he poured out tea for his mother also.

Now it was her turn who was his wife. He stood before her, and she did not raise her eyes. No, she knew what was proper; she had been very well taught, gently bred. But he stood there upon the very spot at which she had been looking so steadfastly, and she saw now the leathern shoes upon his feet and the thick dark stuff of his trousers, made of some foreign material she did not know, unshining and coarse.

'Ah!' he said, his voice distant and respectful. 'The mother of my son is well, I hope?'

'The best daughter-in-law to us, Yuan,' said the old gentleman, suddenly voluble, 'never forgetting any of her duty to us or to your children; always careful in the house, just to the servants——'

'Ah!' said Yuan; 'and where is my son?'

'Here am I!' said that small one loudly, and he stood and stared at his father with eyes as round as dollars.

Yuan laughed and lifted him up and cried merrily, 'So this is what you have done in seven years! You have changed yourself from a crying month-old, red as a radish, into a goodly tall man!'

She could look at him quickly now, when he was turned away from her, absorbed in the child. Yes, he

was changed, he was matured. Her eyes could see the difference. He had been slight and young when he went away at twenty-four, in spite of his cleverness and great learning. But now he had thickened somewhat, grown a little taller, even, and there was another look in his face. Seven years in a distant country had changed him. He had always been confident, assured, quick to laugh, to speak, but in those other days there had been something young and wilful about him. Now he was no longer a youth; he was a man and her master. She was suddenly very shy, and she felt a little warm pink begin to creep out from under her ears. Still speaking no word, she pushed her daughter forward.

'Speak to your father, my child,' she said in a whisper.

But the little girl hung her head, smiling, until the lad cried out, 'There is my sister, too!'

Then Yuan turned and was kindly to his little daughter, and he took her small, needle-pricked hand and he said, 'And what are you making, my Siu-lan, shoes for yourself, or a pillow or something?'

'She is ten years old now,' said the old lady, 'and she is old enough to begin embroidering her marriage clothes. Her mother knows all the good and proper old ways to teach a maid, and so Siu-lan is practising the stitches for her wedding skirt.'

The little girl listened to this with some unspoken impatience. Her under lip pushed up against the upper one and she looked down, and it seemed she was about to speak, except that her mother suddenly put her hand firmly on her shoulder, and so she said nothing after all.

As for the young father, he did not answer his old mother. He opened his mouth, and then he closed it again, and, after a strange pause—as if each listened

for another's voice—he said, to put aside the awkwardness of the moment, 'Ah, it is good to be home again! I must go to my room and wash and refresh myself after these three days on the river. It seemed slow after the Western ways of travel—a hundred miles in three days!' He laughed and went out.

The old gentleman stared a little. 'Three days is not slow,' he said to his wife. 'The winds must have been good enough. If the winds had been adverse and if men had had to pull a boat, five or six days would not have been enough.'

'I went to the temple every day,' answered the old lady gravely. 'I went and prayed for good winds for him and spent two pieces of silver for incense and tea money for the priests. It would have been an ill thing if the winds were not good after that.'

The old gentleman looked tolerantly at his wife. He himself did not go to temples or believe in these gods, being a follower of Confucius and leaving gods to women and children. 'It is the season for winds, now,' he said mildly.

At this the old lady looked up with some spirit and cried:

'Ah, you never believe, but I have tried it again and again, and the gods do hear, and, if I had not gone to the temple regularly, what evil might have come to our son on those great seas and in those strange lands no one knows!'

'Ah, well, and well,' said the old gentleman peaceably, as if this were an old argument between them. 'Worship your gods, and, if you will only ask for things in their proper season, I am sure you will have them.'

But that night, when the evening meal was over and the young man had taken out the presents he had

brought for each of them, the young wife went into the room which she now would share with her husband. While he was gone, she had not slept there because the night seemed too lonely. In the daytime she kept the room brushed and dustless, but at night she slept in a smaller, adjoining room with the two children. Sometimes she had come and sat in that other, empty room with her embroidery, but, except for this, it had been unoccupied. Now she sat here again, waiting for him to come.

He would be late; for his friends had heard of his coming, and they were there in the outer room, making merry over his return. The old father had commanded wine to be heated, the mild rice-wine that was made in this region, and she could hear the young men calling out to one another, drinking to Yuan and calling out, 'To the bottom of the cup now; this time, a clean cup every one!'; 'Drink to Yuan, drink to his new place in the new capital, drink to his son, drink to his many sons to come!' A great laughing broke at this last toast, and she smiled somewhat painfully there alone in the dusky room, and she felt the warmth of blood begin under her ears again. Then she heard meats being passed and the foods that men use with wine, and at last there was the shouting of farewell. Merry calls of future meetings floated through the courts, and above them she could hear Yuan's laughter.

Then, in the sudden quiet of the house, she heard him return from the gate. She heard him say, half-laughing: 'With all this wine I shall have a headache to-morrow. I have not drunk like this since I left!'

'Do they not have wine in foreign parts, then?' asked the old gentleman, surprised.

'Oh, yes,' said Yuan carelessly. 'But it is thick

stuff, and I did not drink it. I had to have a clear head and must still, for that matter, since I have an important post in the new capital. But I shall talk of that to-morrow. It is time for sleep.'

'But you will not go at once to your position, my son?' said the old man. 'You have been away so long. I know it is honourable to work in the capital, and I shall not hold you back. But you have been so long away, and we fain would keep you at home a little while. Moreover, there is your young wife, so good all these years, in the prime of her youth—and you have been away seven years!'

What would he answer? The young wife leaned forward suddenly to listen. Only the silk curtain hung between this room and that. The door was not closed. What would he say? He said nothing for a time. Then he said, as one who has but just remembered an obligation, 'I have a letter to write before I can sleep —I had forgotten it. I will leave you now, my father. Lean upon my arm, and let me take you to your chamber.'

There was the sound of their footsteps, one soft and feeble in velvet shoes and the other clear and hard. The room was silent, and she sat waiting as the wife should, until the husband comes. Then she found the matches on the table and lit the candle and sat down again and waited, her eyes fixed upon the floor. Her hands were cold, and she pressed them together.

When he came in, he came quickly and carelessly as his way was, and he seemed surprised to see her. 'Ah, you are there still? Do not wait,' he said. 'Go to bed. I have a letter that I must write before I go to bed.'

He seated himself at the desk at the far end of the room, the desk where he had been wont to sit and

study years ago when he was fitting himself for the examinations which, if he passed, would take him across the seas. During the seven years, she had often seemed to see him there. Now he searched hastily for paper and for a brush, and he pointed his brush swiftly upon the wetted ink-block.

She sat on quietly. In a moment he threw down the brush with a movement half-petulant, half-laughing. 'I have forgotten how to use the brush,' he said. 'I have written so long with a foreign pen.' And he brought a strange metal pen out of his pocket and began to write with it. He looked up again and saw her. 'Do go to bed!' he said, and his voice even sounded half-angry. 'Do not make me feel you are there waiting. I dislike it.' Then his tone changed again quickly. 'I am sorry—I do not mean to be rude. I appreciate your proper attention. But surely we may dispense with form in these days. Sleep——' He paused, hesitating.

Just at this moment there was a sudden cry from the little boy who lay in the other room. The young man's eyebrows lifted, alarmed.

'He is dreaming,' said the young wife. 'He is accustomed to my sleeping with him all these years, and he misses me.'

The young man's face lightened. 'Ah! Then go to him. I shall be late to-night. I have my affairs to note in my book. Do not let me disturb your habits—not to-night.'

He rose with greatest courtesy. She looked at him quietly. A moment of hesitation hung between them, delicate, difficult. Then she put her hands into her sleeves as women do, and she bowed slightly, saying, 'Pray seat yourself, my lord.'

In her silent, gentle way she moved about the room with movements that were at once graceful and yet swift and economical of effort. She felt the teapot and blew into life with a breath or two the charcoal embers in the little brazier under it. Then she spread the quilt upon the bed and folded it over and dropped the bed curtains of white linen out of the brass hooks that parted them. Then, since the pot was hot, she poured out a bowl of the steaming tea for him. He nodded a little, smiling, busy with his eyes upon his paper. She went out in her perfect stillness.

In this silence she undressed herself to her white linen undergarments, washed her face and hands and rinsed her mouth. Then, before she lay down, she went to the bed where the little girl lay, a small curtained bamboo bed in the opposite corner of the room. She drew aside the curtain and felt of the child's hand as it hung over the edge of the bed. It was warm, but not too hot. She listened to the child's breathing. It was regular and subdued. She took up the candle from the table and searched carefully in the curtains for mosquitoes, found one and pinched it between her fingers. Then she fastened the curtains carefully together and went to her own bed, where her little son lay, naked for the heat except for a little square of red cloth over his belly and fastened about his neck with a silver chain. With the gentlest, stillest care she moved his legs inch by inch, laid his chubby arm against his side and made a little space for herself. She lay down so gently one would not have said a mouse moved, but the child stirred, and she put out her hand and patted him rhythmically, and he, feeling the accustomed touch, fell asleep again, and more deeply.

But the young wife lay motionless and awake. She

listened to every sound from the next room. For a long time there were but the rustlings of paper, the pushing of a drawer into its place. Once an ink-block fell on the floor and broke, and she heard his hasty exclamation in a foreign word she did not understand. Before she lay down, she had put out the candle made of cow's fat lest it burn down in the night and make a vile odour, and she had lighted instead a small bean-oil lamp. Ever since he had gone away, she could not bear to have the room wholly dark, and now, although he was back, it was not the same as it had been before. But the light made by the lamp was very feeble, and the strange, brilliant light of a waning autumn moon came suddenly from over the courtyard wall and poured into the room, and the lamp was suddenly meaningless.

'It must be near dawn,' she thought at last.

Then she heard him give a loud sigh, and he rose and walked to his bedside. There were a few minutes of quiet. She listened acutely. Would he call her now? But she heard him stretch out upon the creaking wooden bed, a great carved bed two generations old, and again he sighed that loud sigh. She heard no other sound, then. He was asleep. As for her, she lay as she had these seven years with her arm curved about her little son.

The next morning she rose as usual an hour before the others and slipped noiselessly out of the bed without waking the child. By the light of the rising sun she unbound her long straight black hair and combed it through and through with a small comb of white bone. She sat before a little toilet table whose mirror lifted up out of the top and stood at just the height of her face. It was the usual table that in those parts a bride brought with her as part of her personal belongings,

and, since her father had not been a poor man, the table was made of good wood, and the drawers had brass handles. Like everything she had, it was cared for and dusted. When her hair was smooth and glistening, she divided it, tying one part with a cord while she coiled the other part. Then she brought the two parts together again, weaving it all into a neat oblong knot about her gold pin. Over it she slipped with her adroit fingers a net of fine black silk thread. Then she took a little brush from a pot of a certain wood oil that stood upon the table and smoothed back the already perfect smoothness of her hair.

There was a cough at the door, and she went to the curtain and received a brass ewer of hot water from a servant there and set it upon a stand made to receive it. The water was very hot, and she wrung a towel out of it and washed her face and arms and her beautiful hands. Then, with the lightest touch of powder upon her face, she was dressed. She had fastened meticulously every button of her thin, grey silk coat and beneath it had girdled her loose trousers neatly about her small round waist with a white silk strip. She wore plain black shoes, since she was not a woman given to wearing flowery things, and, where another woman would choose gems set in gold, she would choose plain metal and the smallest ornament. With all this plainness she was still youthful-looking, being slender-boned and small and delicately shaped. One would not have said she had ever borne children, so slight was her bosom, so straight her body. Yet she was not beautiful. There was some vivacity lacking in her, and she was too quiet, too much the same.

Now, being dressed for the day, she went out into the kitchens and saw that the maids there had begun

the fires and that the rice was simmering in the cauldrons for the morning meal. 'We will have the salted chicken this morning,' she said to the elderly woman who controlled the two country maids under her—one to stoke the brick oven with grass and the other to wash the meats and vegetables and rice and both to be at beck and call.

'I will slice it, then,' replied the elderly servant. 'Is there any other dainty for the young master ?'

'He likes the red bean curd better than the white—the curd with red pepper. Have the red to-day and the best tea.'

At this instant the old maidservant who had stood behind her old mistress the day before came near with two clean towels, a cake of red soap and a brass bowl of very hot water. One of the kitchen-maids followed with a pot of fresh tea. 'Shall we go now, young mistress ?' asked this old servant.

'Yes, Wang Ma,' answered the young wife, and she preceded the servants to the door of her mother-in-law's room, and there she paused and coughed delicately.

'Come in !' called the old lady, and they went in.

'My mother, I hope you have slept well,' said the young wife in her subdued voice, and, taking the teapot from the maid's hands, she set it upon the table and poured a bowl of it and stood before the closed curtains of the bed, waiting. A small thin yellow hand came out and took the tea. The young wife poured another bowl, and this was so received, also. Then she went to the table, and from the receptacles there she mixed a little opium and lit a small lamp to burn under the bowl of the opium pipe that was there, and this the skinny hand received also into the closed curtains.

Then the young wife and the maid withdrew, leaving the old servant to await her old mistress's pleasure.

Every morning the young wife performed these rites in exactly this order. Then she usually returned to her own room to help her children rise. But this morning there was yet another to whom she must go. She had as a matter of course formerly so brought tea to her husband. But somehow this morning it seemed difficult. He was so changed. It would be like going into a strange man's room. Nevertheless, it was still her duty. She called to the maid, 'Fetch another brass bowl of hot water and a fresh pot of tea—the best pewter and the new green tea.'

She waited, and, when the maid returned, she lifted the lid of the freshly infused pot of tea and sniffed it delicately. Then she went to the door of the room where her husband slept, and coughed, the maid waiting behind her. There was no answer, although she listened with her ear to the silken curtain. Then she felt behind the curtain. He had closed the door. She patted it gently with the flat of her hand.

'Who is it?' her husband shouted suddenly.

She was appalled by this suddenness. She had forgotten what it was like to have a young and vigorous man in the house. Seven years is a long time, and she had been living wholly alone with the two old people and the children. Since her own father and mother were dead, she had not even visited her old home. She had forgotten what a young man's voice could be when it shouts out.

The door opened abruptly, and Yuan stood there, his eyes heavy with sleep and his stiff black hair awry. 'What is it?' he asked in a voice somewhat ill-tempered.

'Your tea,' his wife faltered.

'Tea!' he exclaimed. Then he smiled and rubbed his hand over his spiky hair and yawned. 'Ah, well, bring it in! I had forgotten tea. I have not had it these seven years so early.' Then his eyes fell on the brass bowl. 'I shall want more water than that,' he said with decision. 'I have the habit of bathing all over in the morning.'

His wife looked at the maid in consternation.

'It would take a great deal of water—men usually go to the bath-house to wash themselves all over,' said the maid bluntly; she was newly from the country and did not know how to be polite, even when she did not wish to offend.

But this bluntness did offend the young mistress, and she said with dignity, 'Certainly the young master can have what he likes in his own home.' And to Yuan she said, 'The water will be here soon.'

'Ah, if it is trouble in the house——' said Yuan carelessly.

'How can it be trouble when you have been away seven years?' she answered simply.

He looked away at this and busied himself with pouring another bowl of tea, and, when she saw he had nothing more to say, she turned and went away to see to the heating of the water.

Yet it seemed to the young wife that surely this first day her husband was back must be different from the seven quiet years when he had been away. The greatest events in all those hundreds of days had been his letters. The old gentleman read them aloud to all of them, to the two ladies sitting in their places and the two children sitting upon their stools. Yet there was no great variety in Yuan's letters—study, an occasional

strange sight seen, sometimes a command given, as when he wrote, 'My daughter's feet are not to be bound,' and when he wrote, 'My son is to be sent to the modern State school, and he is not to learn the Four Books as I did. It is not necessary in these days.'

Both of these commands had given consternation when the old father read them aloud. He had paused and looked over his great brass spectacles at the two ladies who sat listening.

'If the girl's feet are not to be bound, how will she get a good husband?' said the old mother, astounded. Her own small pointed feet were crossed before her on a brass foot-stove wherein were coals, since, when this letter came, it was winter.

They had not accepted the command at once, and the old father had written to his son, pointing out the difficulty. The reply was speedy—it came in little more than two months—and it was as emphatic as ever. 'I am to be obeyed in this. I shall be extremely angry if I am not obeyed,' he wrote.

This had nettled the old gentleman somewhat, and he said with gentle heat, his eyes rolling a little, his hand trembling and stroking his grey beard quickly, 'I hope my son does not forget that while I live I am the one to give final directions to the family. No, I hope my son does not forget this!'

In the end it had been Yuan's wife who said in her soft firm way, 'I had better obey my husband. Let it be as he says.' And so she had not bound the girl's feet, although it had been a sorrow to her, too, to see them lengthening beyond all hope of change, and at least she had the girl's shoes made as narrow and firm as possible.

But, when the matter of the boy's learning had come up, and this was but recently, since the lad was so small, it was the old gentleman who was sorest disturbed, and he said in his distress, 'But not learn the Four Books? But not know the sayings of Confucius the Master? What will he study, then?'

For the old gentleman was a student of all the books of Confucius, and he believed that in these books only was rectitude to be found. He was himself careful to do all he could to conform to the behaviour that Confucius sets forth for the conduct of the superior man. Thus the old gentleman went to excess in nothing; in all he observed the golden mean. It was therefore of the greatest moment to him that his son and his son's son should know the Way. For women he did not consider that it mattered. They were simple and their minds concrete, and he believed that they might be allowed to worship the gods which can be seen. Women are so made that all must be plain and visible for them.

'My grandson will grow up without virtue,' he said solemnly.

But there was not time to reach Yuan with a letter, and so they waited.

These had been the questions of greatest moment when Yuan was away, so smoothly had seven years slipped past. As for the young wife, her father had died of a summer flux one year, and the next winter her mother had died of a strange illness none knew, and the land had gone to her four brothers. The old spreading house was divided among the four growing families, and the young wife had no desire to return to it any more, since it was no longer her home. Instead, she had buried her life with deeper devotion in this

house where she was wed, loving well these old two who were very kind to her.

She could never be grateful enough that the gods had given her so good a mother-in-law. When she went with the old lady to the Temple of the Three Buddhas, she gave thanks before the god who makes marriages, he who, with his silken, scarlet thread, ties two lives together before ever they are born into this world. Well she knew, as all maids know, that some mothers-in-law are cruel and jealous of their sons' wives and make their lives worthless. But hers was a mother to her. They suited each other well, this quiet girl and the gentle, unworldly old lady, who lived so much with the gods, who believed so deeply in the need for every kindness to all living things that for many years she had not touched a bit of flesh of any kind in her food —not even an egg—which might give life. If a moth fluttered in at the window, she would not have it killed. No, she bade a maid catch it and hold it gently and release it into the night again, and, even if the night were windless and hot, she would have the papered lattices drawn, so that no moths could flutter in and be burned in the flame of the candles.

Yes, the young wife could love and serve two like these. The old gentleman was as kind to her as if she were his own daughter. Every morning he went to his tea-shop for a little while to see what the clerks did and how the stores of tea were. When he came back, his garments slightly fragrant with the tea, the young wife was swift to fetch his teapot and, if it were summer, his fan, or, if winter, his foot-stove. She learned how to mix his opium as he liked it best, and she kept the books in his study dusted and set in order the small

collection of old fans he had for his pleasure, since these were too ancient and frail for a servant's handling. And he was not like some fathers-in-law who receive the services of their sons' wives as a right and so it ought to be. No, he had an eye quick to notice the small things she did for him, and he would thank her with such courtesy and praise that his praise was the sweetest thing in the world to her. So she builded herself into this house, and she prided herself on the care she gave to it.

It was not as large a house as some, since it also had been divided in the last generation, but there were three courts—the peony court, the bamboo court, and the chrysanthemum court; and, since the old gentleman loved flowers, there were peonies and, under the bamboos, lilies, and, in autumn, chrysanthemums. The gala day of the spring was when the first thick red shoots of the peonies thrust themselves out of the black soil of the peony terrace. They all went to see this, and the only time the young wife had ever seen the old gentleman forget himself in anger was when his little grandson had reached over and had wantonly broken off a rosy shoot. The old gentleman without a word had bent and slapped the child's round cheek with his bony old fingers, and they stung and left four red marks on the child's golden skin. For a moment the boy's face was transfixed with surprise; then he burst into a mighty yell of terror.

The old gentleman turned very pale. 'I have forgotten myself,' he muttered, and he went away quickly to his room, and he sat there alone in meditation for a long time.

In the evening the young wife took her son by the hand and led him to his grandfather and made him

kneel and knock his head before the old man in sign of his sorrow at what he had done. Then she herself made apology for her son thus:

'I do not know why my son is so mannerless, my father. I am ashamed and grieved, and I ask forgiveness from you because I have not been able to teach him better.'

The old gentleman raised the boy tenderly and held him in the circle of his arm and said, 'It is true that it was wrong to touch the peony and cut off its life. Now there will never be the beautiful bud and the ferny leaves and the full flower. No, that shoot is cut off as if one died young.' Then he paused and said with effort, 'But he is only a child. I am an old man, and I have for many years followed in the footsteps of my Master, and I thought I knew something of the Way and that nothing could betray me into anger any more. I thought the coarseness of anger was impossible to me. I see I am not so far as I thought.'

He sighed and was so sad that his daughter-in-law could not bear it and she said gently, 'You are the most perfect man I have ever seen and the kindest father to me always and to every one.'

He smiled at this and was comforted a little, too, although he would not show it, and he turned to his book again, and the young wife led the child away.

With such small things the greatest events in this house—and not even feast days too marked because Yuan was away—the seven years slipped by almost like dreams. Summer slowed into autumn. The chrysanthemums glowed in the courts a little while; and then it was winter and the scarlet berries of the Indian bamboo glittered against shallow snow in the courts,

and then spring came again in the small pale lilies and the leafless flowers of plum against black branches. And so it was, year after year.

In the young wife's own life the greatest events were but two, after the birth of her son. The first was his weaning, which she had not completed until he was four years old, and the second was the swift illness he had had one summer two years ago. That swift illness stood out for her as the sharpest fear she had ever had. In the morning he was well and merry, and by night he was nearly lifeless, seized with such vomiting and flux and fever that in a few hours his body was shrunken and dried to his frame. They had all been beside themselves, and the old lady had rushed on foot to the temple, she who scarcely walked about the courts even, and she had promised silver enough to fill her two hands brimming if the child did not die. She flung herself down on the reed mat before the mother goddess, and she knocked her old head again and again on the tiled floor, and she lay there in such sobbing and prayer as would have moved any heart, even of gilded clay. Even the greedy priests feared she might die from such anguish, and they came to lift her up, saying, 'Lady, you have prayed, and the goddess will hear. Go back—he is better.'

But, when she reached home, the child was not better, and he was blue about the lips and his finger-nails were black and he was gasping.

Then Wang Ma, the old servant, who had seen seven of her own children die in the days when she was young enough to bear them, cried out and said, 'His spirit is wandering. Quick! We must win it back!' And, lighting a paper lantern, she ran out, calling to the young mother to follow her with the child's coat, and

they sped over the cobbled streets, going here and there and everywhere.

Wang Ma held the lantern high, and at every step she called, 'Child, come home—come home!' And the young mother held up the little red coat the child wore every day and most commonly, so that the wandering childish spirit might recognize its garb and see where it belonged. How many times had she not heard this call of other people, other mothers, and shuddered and held her own child close, and now here was she! Passers by cried out to see them and said, 'Ah, may the child live!' And the young mother who in her proper seclusion never passed beyond the gates of the house now ran upon her small feet over the round and slippery stones, seeing nothing of all the strange sights of the city, seeing only the pallid, dying child who was the only son she had borne to her husband.

But it had served. When they returned, exhausted, they found the old grandfather by the bedside and a maid standing with a bowl of hot broth, and the old grandfather slipped spoonful after spoonful into the child's mouth. The boy's eyes were still closed, but he could swallow. The spirit had returned.

The child grew well almost as quickly as he had fallen ill. But the others did not so quickly recover from the terror of the night. No, the old grandfather was pale for days afterwards, and every now and again he would call the child to him suddenly and feel the small body rounding again and quick with life once more, and he would laugh gently and say, 'Well, you are my own, and you are whole again, my child!'

And the old lady said again and again, 'If I had not gone as I did to the temple and if the goddess had not had mercy and spared him to us, what else

could have saved him, and I count the silver well spent!

As for the young mother, she woke still sometimes in the night, wet with a chill sweat because she dreamed she was stumbling again through the dark streets, holding the little red coat for the child's escaped spirit to see.

So the seven years had passed in deep, narrow, peaceful living in this house. All their dreams centred in the return of the one who was away. The old father dreamed of his son's coming back to an official position and becoming a noble statesman, such as there had been in the past history of the family. There had never been a fighting man from his family at the courts of the emperors; there had been those far more honourable—advisers, viceroys, even a prime minister. The family had not always been merchants, although there was always one merchant to look after the tea-lands and to provide the money necessary if a change in dynasty meant that for a time a statesman must go into retirement. Therefore the old gentleman had no higher dream for his son than this, that he might serve as an official in some high place.

It is true that now the times of the empire were passed and the affairs of the nation were changed. But government is government, and, when his son came and begged to be allowed to go to foreign countries to study, the old father was moved most when Yuan said, 'I cannot hope to achieve any place in the affairs of State now, unless I have Western learning. Either I will give up my studies and come into the tea business with you or I must go abroad.'

'And are the Four Books to be nothing?' replied the old gentleman with mild heat. 'I have taught you

them well, and you went also to a scholar to learn and also to the schools of Western learning that foreigners have on the coast.'

But Yuan had answered firmly, 'The Four Books are nothing to-day except old and curious books, and they will not put a man in any place at all.'

This had been more than the old man would believe, but still he let his son have his way.

But it was the old mother who was most stubborn, and she would not give her consent. 'No, and not till you have a son, Yuan,' she said with the gentlest voice, but with her eyes very bright and hard.

'Now how can I make a son?' he had answered, trying to be good-humoured with his mother, but impatient, too, and his face reddening quickly. 'Suppose she has girls and nothing but girls, as some women do! Am I to give up all hope of advancement because my wife has no sons?'

'We must have a son, Yuan,' said the old lady, drawing a little harder upon her pipe than she was wont. 'If you die in those wild lands, we shall have your flesh and blood here still.' Then she said in her calm way, 'I will help you this much. I will pray double what I have been praying for a son for you, and I will give more to the goddess of sons than I have!'

'For that inclination I thank you, my mother,' said the young man, laughing shortly. 'I wish I could be as sure as you that I shall have a son.'

To this his mother replied with great gravity. 'My son, we are taught that if we believe in the gods we shall receive from them.'

But Yuan said no more. He never dared to tell his mother that he did not believe at all in the religion to which she clung. No, not since he was a little boy,

frightened and timorous before the fierce faces of the warrior gods, clinging to her hand when they went to the temple, not since those early days had he believed. But neither did he tell his old father that he believed no more in the Confucian principles in which he had been reared.

No, the heart of this son of theirs, if his parents had known it, would have stricken them ; for it was full of belief, it is true, but belief in strange vessels of war, such as they had never seen, and in mighty guns and in well-trained armies and in force and might of every kind. What he dreamed of secretly was that one day for his country he would make such guns and a gun for every man to carry, and great ships of steel carrying huge cannon, and ships in the sky such as his parents had never even heard of, carrying the death that drops on the people below on the earth. For this he had spent his seven years, learning how to make such things as these against a certain day about which he and his friends talked often enough. Thus he had busied himself, while his old father read his books and studied his old fans and pottered among his flowers and while his mother watched lest a moth be burned and while his young wife cared for the home.

Now, although these seven years were over and he was back among them as he used to be, they were all aware that he was not as he had been among them. Before the second day after his return they all knew that Yuan was somehow changed. His heart was elsewhere, and he seemed, even when he laughed and talked, to be thinking of another place, some other life.

He was very busy writing letters. Three letters came for him in one day, each marked with a great seal. He took them in silence and told no one what was in them,

but, when the third one came, he left his desk and went to his father, who at that hour of the day, just after noon, sat in a reed chair under the pine-tree taking a little sleep. His large handkerchief was over his face to keep the flies away.

Yuan coughed, and the old gentleman peered out from under the handkerchief. When he saw it was his son who coughed, he struggled to his feet, a little confused with his sleep.

'Yes—yes——' he said.

Yuan began to speak at once. 'My father, I am called to go at once to the capital. I cannot wait beyond to-day. I must leave at dawn to-morrow. I am sorry; for I had planned to spend a whole month here with you. But there are developments—international developments——' Yuan hesitated.

'Yes—yes——' said the old gentleman vaguely. He wiped his face with the handkerchief and passed his hands over his beard and opened and closed his mouth, dry with his sleep. 'International?' he repeated. This was a new word he had never heard before.

'With foreign countries,' said Yuan.

The old father cried out in consternation, 'You do not mean you are going again to foreign countries!'

The young man pressed his lips together a little to control some inner impatience. Then he answered, 'No, no, not that. But there is some talk of war with the country to the north of us. I am needed.'

'Ah,' said the old father. He staggered a little and laid his hand on his son's arm. 'Well, if you must go, you must go. But do not have anything to do with wars, my son. Wars are evil and are entered into only by coarse and low persons.'

Yuan's lips twitched slightly. 'No, my father,' he

ld with great gravity, and, measuring his steps to the father's, he went with his father into the house.

But to his young wife Yuan made not even these xplanations, since he felt she was a woman who could not be expected to understand anything outside her home. But he was very kind to her and he said, 'I egret that I cannot have the month at home which had planned. I have scarcely seen my children. I have many plans for them. I can stay longer at the New Year perhaps.'

All the day Yuan was away seeing this friend and that. He did not even come home for the noon meal, and at night he went to a feast to which he was invited. When he went, he said to his wife, 'Do not wait for me, if you please. I prefer not to be waited for. I shall be late to-night, and to-morrow I start at dawn.'

His wife answered nothing at all to this, merely standing before him and holding ready for him the curious curved stick he now used when he walked out. It would not have occurred to her not to wait for him, since this was her duty.

Therefore on this night, when she had done her usual tasks, she went into Yuan's room and sat upright upon the chair by the table, the candle lighted beside her. For a long time she worked at the embroidery she was making for the ends to be set into a pair of round pillows for her daughter's marriage-bed. But at last she grew a little weary of the intricate pattern, and she laid her work aside, folding it up neatly, and then she sat with her hands folded over each other in perfect stillness. They were such hands that, when they were seen thus in repose, one might have thought them carved or painted they were so perfect in their shape and paleness. Thus she sat.

took his hand away. Then he bowed again and was gone.

When the gate had closed behind him, the young wife came out and began to collect the dishes on the table very quietly. The old man watched her closely, but she was apparently intent upon this task, and there was nothing to be seen from this face of hers. It was pale but not more pale than usual, and, although it was so early, she was dressed as she always was, and her hair was smooth. Suddenly the old man struck his two hands together.

'We forgot to ask him about the Four Books for the child,' he said. 'Run, my daughter, and see if he is gone out of hearing!'

She ran obediently and opened the gate and looked down the silent, unlighted street, on either side of which the closed houses could now be faintly seen in the coming dawn. But she could not see Yuan at all, except that at the farthest end of the street there was a small light. It was the light of the lantern the servant carried to guide his master to the river's edge where the junk lay. She went back to the old man.

'It is too late; he is gone,' she said.

The old man's face fell a little. Then he said, 'It does not matter. He will be back this time very soon. At worst he must be back in time for the New Year, and that is less than six months away. Six months is nothing after seven years!'

The young wife smiled faintly in answer. Nevertheless, it seemed to her suddenly that this six months would be longer than all the seven years had been.

Now the days were exactly as they had been, except that the letters Yuan wrote were not stamped with the

strange figures they once were and they were not filled with the accounts of his studies. Instead, he spoke of conferences, of great men he met and dined with and also of great ladies.

At first this mention of ladies had made the old gentleman somewhat stiff in his manner as he read the letters aloud to the old mother and to Yuan's young wife. Indeed, he omitted the lines in which Yuan said, 'Last night I dined with Madame Ching.' This the old gentleman did not read, because he supposed it must be some light woman, and it would not be respectful to the two ladies of his house to mention such a person to them.

But another time Yuan said, 'To-night I am to dine with Madame, the lady of the Prime Minister.' Then the old gentleman, feigning not to see a character clearly, hesitated, while the two ladies waited for him to go on. The truth was he was suddenly dismayed. If the ladies of the chief ministers of state were persons like this, what of the State then? Therefore he omitted these lines and read on, and, when the letter was read, he rose and went into his own room, drawing his curtain over his door so that any one seeing it might know he was not to be disturbed.

In his room alone he seated himself by his old polished desk that stood under the lattice, and with great care he began to mix the ink upon the block. When it was exactly the consistency he liked, he pointed his brush in it extremely fine and began to paint upon the paper the letters for which he was really somewhat famous among his friends in the tea business. But these letters for all their beauty were sharp in their meaning. They said: 'My son, take care how you entangle yourself with women in high places. It is better to rise more slowly and to rise without the help of women.' Then he signed

and sealed the letter and sent it at once by messenger. When this was accomplished, he lighted a candle and burned to the last scrap the letter which Yuan had written.

But, when the answer to his letter came, it was evident that Yuan was at pains to set his father right. It was a very long letter, and it was fortunate that the servant had brought it when the old gentleman was alone since, when he had read it, he decided it was not such a letter as he wished to read aloud. No, it was full of a great deal that he had never heard before, and in his room with the curtain drawn he read it over three times and burned it at once. True, he was the only one in the house who could read, but still it was better to burn it. It was full of such phrases as these: 'In this new day wives should stand beside husbands as equals'; 'In this new day we men cannot be satisfied with the old standards of wives who are part servants, part mistresses'; 'Not to have an educated wife is my great handicap. I have no one to keep such a home as I must have and to entertain for me, to be a companion to me. I am anxious even now because my children are not taught as they should be.'

The old gentleman sat quite rigid for a long time after reading this letter and after it had become ashes. He felt somewhat faint at last, and he clapped his hands. His daughter-in-law heard the sound and, when a servant would have run to him, stayed the maid and said, 'I will go myself, since the children are playing with their rabbits and do not need me now.'

When the old gentleman saw her come in, he stared a little, and his eyes grew moist. 'I am glad it is you,' he said. 'I feel a little faint. I should like my pipe.'

Then he went and lay on a long, carved couch where

he usually smoked his opium, and he watched while his daughter-in-law's slender figure bent over the mixing of the stuff. Her small, smooth face was wholly intent, and she took great care that the opium was exactly as he liked it. He never took his eyes from her at all so long as she did not look up.

When she brought the pipe to him at last and lighted the little lamp under its bowl, he said, 'Child, how old are you?'

'I am twenty-seven, my father,' she answered in great surprise.

'And you were married ten years ago,' said the old gentleman slowly.

'Ten years,' and her voice was like an echo of his, but it was not sad, only patient and mild.

'We have been wrong,' said the old man suddenly. 'My son's mother and I are wrong. We have grown so to lean upon you and to need you about us, so much our daughter are you, that we have not realized that we have deprived our son of his wife. While he was in foreign countries, it was impossible for you to be with him. You could not go there with children, certainly. But now he is in his own country. He has his house there in the capital, and there should be a mistress in his house to see that his feasts are given properly and that the servants do as they should and that he has what he likes.'

'You mean, my father——' said the young wife, and her pretty eyebrows that were like willow leaves seemed to flutter above her eyes.

'I mean you must go to Yuan,' said the old man.

The opium began to be hot and its sweetish smell crept through the room and hung upon the air, heavy and sweet. Since the old gentleman was not smoking

yet, the young wife turned the lamp flame a little by waving her graceful hand gently in front of the flame. She dropped her eyes to this task, and so he felt free to look at her again—in the school in which he had been bred no gentleman stares into a woman's face if he respects her. He saw the pink flush creep out from beneath the lobes of her ears.

'You would like to go?' he said kindly.

She did not speak for a moment, pondering, the eyebrows moving a little above her eyes. Then she said, 'I do not think I should go unless there was some one here with you, my father, and with my mother.'

'We have Wang Ma,' said the old gentleman. 'We can manage. Truly we should miss you. It would be like our hearts gone—and the children, the house would be empty without them. But I must think of my son first. I have not done well by my son. I have thought much about this. You should have gone with him when he went to the capital.'

'He went so quickly,' she murmured.

'Ah,' said the old gentleman, 'too quickly. I shall write him.'

Then he began to smoke, and the gentleness of his face deepened into absorption and settled gravity, too deep even for ordinary sleep. His daughter-in-law stood there until she saw he had no need of her, and then she went away.

She went then, this young wife, into the middle room where she had been sitting with her mother-in-law, since it was afternoon, and she took up the embroidery she had laid down. The green bird was finished now, and she was working on the spray of plum blossoms beneath its feet. Ten years from now her daughter would be sleeping as a bride above these symbols.

At this moment there was a cry heard from the court, and the boy burst in, holding a wriggling white rabbit by the ears. He complained loudly, 'My sister says this one is hers, but it is mine! I know it is mine!'

The mother rose and went to the door, holding the child's fat hand in hers. He was pouting and crying over and over, 'I want it for mine—it must be mine——' The little girl was out in the court, bent over a rabbit-hutch as if she did not hear, thrusting cabbage leaves into it.

'My daughter!' called the mother.

Then the little girl turned and looked at her mother with a direct, rebellious gaze. She was a handsome child, with her mother's regularity of feature, but she had some fire that her mother had not.

'It is truly mine,' she said in a quiet, perfectly firm voice.

'My child!' said the mother again and paused.

The girl stood erect, threw down the cabbage leaves she held and bit her lip. She said in the same hard voice, 'It is a strange thing that I must always let him have his way.'

'But, my child!' the mother said again for the third time; and the girl burst suddenly into sobs and ran past her mother into the room where she slept.

'It is mine, then!' said the boy triumphantly.

'Yes, my son, it is yours,' said the mother quietly, and she left him and sat down again to her embroidery.

The old lady had listened to all this, and now she sighed a little. Then she said, 'It will be well when you have another son, my daughter, with whom this boy must share his goods, even though he is the eldest son. I perceive he is very wilful by nature.'

The young mother did not answer. She was listening

to the sounds that came from the inner room. They were deep sobs, buried and softened by something held over the girl's mouth. At last the mother rose, unable to endure this sound any longer, and with that peculiar stillness which was her chief characteristic she went into the room and approached the bed where the little girl had thrown herself. The child lay under the quilt. The mother drew it aside, and, when the girl turned, her face was red and wet with weeping, and her eyes were hard. Her mother said nothing but began to smooth away the fringe of black hair that hung over the child's brow. It was the softest, smoothest touch, and the girl's hardness faded gradually under it, and her face took on a plaintive look. When the mother saw this, she began to speak in a low voice that was almost a whisper.

'My child, I did not even ask whose rabbit it was. I must teach you somehow to learn submission. Submission to father and to brother, then to husband. If your brother says it is his wish to have the rabbit, you must defer to him.'

'But why?' the child wailed suddenly. 'It was my rabbit! I know it because it has one black whisker. And he pulls it so by the ears!'

'You learn submission by submitting first to your father and to your brother; then you will know how to submit to your husband,' the mother explained patiently, as if she repeated a thing she had heard and had said many times. 'A woman must learn to obey. We must not ask why. We cannot help our birth. We must accept it and do the duty that is ours in this lifetime.'

But her smooth, light hand never ceased its movement on the child's head, and this touch seemed to bring some calmness that her words could not. Indeed,

it was true that she had said these words many times before, in this long training she must pass on to her daughter even as her own mother had passed it on to her. They were not new words, being many hundreds of years old. But the regular, soothing touch was the direct, mute message she had for her daughter, and the girl received it and for this once was comforted.

A few days later, when they were all seating themselves about the table for the evening meal, the old father looked with gentle pleasure at his daughter-in-law and smoothed his beard and cleared his throat. There was a mild sparkle in his eye which betokened something unusual in his mind. When she had put before him the broth that he liked and the small balls of pork and had set before her mother-in-law the vegetable dishes prepared for her without even the oil of any flesh, the old gentleman cleared his throat again.

With the fingers of one hand in his beard he said, brightly, 'My daughter, I wrote to-day to Yuan to say you were ready to come to him at once with the children. It is true what he said in one of his letters—a man should have a mistress in his house, and for his servants. I said, if he could beg a few days' leave and come to fetch you, that would be best, but, if he could not, the journey is not difficult, and the old manservant can take you. He is old and faithful, and I can escort you to the junk here. There are but three days by sea, and surely Yuan can come to the coast to meet you and accompany you on the land journey, which is less than one day. Even if he cannot do this, you are safe with the servant, since he used to travel that road often with Yuan when he accompanied him as a youth to school. It is very simple. And true it is that a man needs his wife in his house. Yuan is right.'

Yuan's wife said nothing to this, because there were several thoughts in her mind. First of all was the warm, secret pleasure she had because she heard that her husband had written that he needed his wife in his house. So, then, the vague feeling she had had that perhaps he was changed to her was a foolish one. He needed her still—had written that he needed her. Her hands trembled a little as she stirred her chopsticks in the central dish of chicken and mushrooms for the titbit that her son was demanding noisily.

'There, my mother—that piece, the white bit! No, that!'

'It is what my grandfather likes best,' said the little girl accusingly.

The young mother paused. 'So it is, my son,' she said gently. 'It is your grandfather's favourite bit.'

The boy pressed his full lips together hard, and his eyes grew very wide and bright as if he might begin to weep. The old gentleman leaned over at once and picked up the titbit with his chopsticks and placed it on the child's bowl of rice.

'It is for you to-day, little one,' he said, smiling, and the child laughed suddenly.

'Thank your grandfather, my son,' his mother said gravely.

The child stood up, willing enough now that he had his way, and he bowed.

The grandfather put out his hand, smoothed the boy's golden cheek and said in a soft, regretful voice, 'Ah, if you go with your mother, my man——'

'Am I going somewhere?' exclaimed the child in sudden excitement. 'On the boat?' He leaped up, tipping over his rice-bowl and the meats upon it, and he

cried out again, heedless of what he had done, 'Mother, when shall we go? Where are we going?'

But his mother had begun at once to repair the damage the child had done. 'Hush, child,' she said. 'It is too soon to talk of it. It is whatever your father says.'

'Ah, he will write you are to come at once,' said the old gentleman quickly. 'Let us count the days. To-day and seven days, and we shall receive his letter—say perhaps a day or two more because of winds, and we shall have it.'

'I do not see how I shall manage without my daughter-in-law,' said the old lady suddenly, perceiving what all this was about. She had been supping her soup of cabbage hearts with a porcelain spoon, since she had only a few teeth left and loved soup best of all foods. Now she stopped and put her spoon down upon a little saucer and looked around at them all. 'I am used to her, and it is hard for a person of my age to be without her daughter-in-law. I cannot undertake the management of the servants as I did when I was young.'

'There will not be much management with only the two old ones of us here,' said the old gentleman.

'But——' the old lady began once more. Then, glancing at her husband, she saw a look on his face which for one so mild was terrible in its command for silence, and in some alarm she began to sup her soup again hastily.

'Yes, she must go,' said the old gentleman again. 'And you must go, my little one, also.'

'And I?' asked the little girl, who had been listening intently to all this, her eyes very wide.

'Yes, perhaps you too,' answered her grandfather,

'although, if your grandmother misses you too much——'

The little girl's face turned pale, and she put down the chopsticks with which she had been eating. 'If I cannot go, I shall die,' she said positively.

At this the old lady looked up in great irritation. 'Do not, my child, use words like "die" and "death" so carelessly! One never knows what spirits——'

The young wife spoke. 'If my mother can spare us and we must go, I should like to take both the children, since it is the time now when my daughter must be taught many things. But of course I am not to decide. It is true that my mother at her age cannot control the maids. They are good if controlled, but otherwise they will yield to opportunity, and there will be laxness in the house.'

'We will manage, we will manage,' said the old gentleman heartily. 'Wang Ma shall control the maids, and she can mix the stuff for my pipe and go with her mistress to the temple. We will manage!'

But the young wife, who now said no more, could scarcely for all her stillness wait until the meal was over. With her usual swift motions, she saw to it that each one had what he liked, that the tea-bowls of the two old ones were filled with the red tea the old father liked and the green tea the old mother liked. She did scrupulously all she did every day, missing nothing; and after the table was cleared and the old pair sat drinking their tea she led the children to them, each in turn, and then she washed the boy while the old woman servant helped the girl, and so they were put to bed.

Only then did the young wife not do what she usually did. She went into her husband's room instead of returning to her parents-in-law, and she sat there in the

darkness in his chair, and she began soberly to think of what this future might mean to her. She could not imagine what it might be to leave this house. She thought of every separate part of it over which she guarded. Who would see to it that the three courts were kept in order, that the young bamboo shoots were protected in spring—the largest left to grow, the small ones cut to eat? The servants left to themselves would pretend each year that there were no shoots and would never bring one to the old pair to eat. Servants were so. Who would dust the old gentleman's fans? His own hands were too trembling now to do it. These and a hundred other small duties that filled her life occurred to her now and seemed to lay on her invisible bonds that she could not easily break. They were duties that had become habits, the mute needs of inanimate things —certain bits of carving that she alone dusted, with a feather dipped in oil, the rolling of certain scrolls that hung upon the walls at certain seasons and the hanging of others in their place, the cleaning of the four ancestral tablets that stood in a niche in one of the outer rooms, the preparation for the obeisances to be made and the sacrifices to be burned at the family graves on the day in spring when it was proper to do these things. The fulfilment of all these duties—the rites of family life, which make a house entire and cared-for and full of well-being—depended upon her, seeing that none save her so belonged to this house, as daughter and wife and mother.

Yet there was her husband. He needed her also in the house where he lived. It was not to be hoped that he could again live as he had when he was a boy in this small old city, where there was nothing for such a one as he to achieve. With all the languages he had on his

tongue and all the other things he knew, it was necessary that he should live in the capital. They could not spare him there, doubtless. She sighed a little. It did not occur to her that there was anything she could not do there that she did in this house or that there could be anything about a home which she did not know. If she went to her husband, doubtless there would be a house like this one but somewhat smaller. She would see to the kitchen as she did here, herself cooking the special dishes he liked or the dishes for a feast not large enough to be sent in by professional cooks. She would see to the wines as she did here. There would be furniture to keep clean, a court to be persuaded into bloom, her daughter to be taught as she was now, the son to nurture. No, there was nothing she did not know about a woman's duties.

The old gentleman coughed suddenly at the door, and she rose and went out. The old lady had retired. The old gentleman stood there alone. He said, 'I have decided you are to go, my daughter. So prepare your boxes for your possessions and the children's, also, if it be that you still feel you must take the little girl; for you shall go to be with your husband.'

She bowed her head slightly. 'I do what you command, my father,' she replied. 'I take the little girl only because it is the time when she should be preparing for her life, and there is much I must teach her for the future, and my mother is so old it would be hardship to her.'

But, after all, it seemed the young wife was not to go. Just as she had come to think of her going with secret, sweet excitement, not one sign of which she allowed to escape her outwardly, a letter came, and the old gentleman did not read it to them. No, he was so disturbed

when he read it that they did not know what to do for him. He was scarcely calmed with his pipe, and he would not eat. He sat staring at his son's wife, and they all waited for him to speak. But he did not speak.

At last the young wife could wait no more, since she was frightened, and with a boldness that was wholly foreign to her she entered the old gentleman's room on a pretext of some service, and she said, 'My father, if it be so that you can tell me, tell me then when I am to go, because there are certain things I must see to in the house first, the winter clothing and the furs to sun, so that my mother will be spared the superintending of the task.'

The old gentleman coughed then, and he coughed longer than he needed, as if he did not know what to say, but at last he spoke: 'Child, there is the strangest letter from Yuan, and I cannot tell you what he said. But I must go and see for myself what his life is. Then, when I come back, you must be ready, and you shall go.'

Now, the old gentleman had not been away from his home since he was young, and the two ladies were in consternation when they heard this. To the daughter-in-law it seemed impossible; for how could he bear the journey and who would see to his pipe and to the things he liked to eat? The old wife was distracted, and each lady begged in her own way that he would explain what the matter was and if Yuan were ill or not. But the old gentleman was stubborn and silent as he had never been before, and he would say nothing except, 'No, he is not ill; no, I must go myself and see to it—I must go and see for myself.'

So they could do nothing except take care that there was every change of garment he might need in his boxes,

and the young wife herself put in garments suitable to every season, since who knew what the winds were in that northern place where Yuan lived? And she put in his favoured tea in a lacquered box; for well she knew he could not drink such coarse tea as is sold commonly to travellers. And she put in boxes of delicacies, so that he need not be dependent on the wretched fare that travellers must eat. And they sent with him two servants, one of them the old man who travelled with Yuan. Then, when they had seen the old gentleman into his sedan safely, his hands shaking with excitement but his eyes bright and hard and his lips set together in his beard, the two ladies could do no more than go again into the courts where their life was and wait.

So the young wife waited the days that the old gentleman was away, and on the fortieth day he returned. They had not known on what day or at what hour to expect him, since he had not written a letter, because there was no one who could read it if he had, and it is an ill thing to take a letter to a professional reader if there is anything private in it. Therefore the old gentleman was at the gate before they knew it, and he came into the court staggering, as if he were very weary, and he scarcely lifted his eyes. He smiled so wearily that the two ladies were frightened, and the old wife went after him into his room, and the young wife of his son hastened to prepare the best chicken broth that could be made, to restore him.

Three days he lay in his bed in silence. He groaned every now and then, and he said nothing except a word of thanks for some service, and they waited and knew some dreadful thing was on his mind, but they did not know what. On the third day he rose and dragged himself into his usual garments and sat on his chair by his

desk, and he called for his wife and for his daughter-in-law, and the two of them came in. Well they knew he had something hard to say to them. The old mother was frightened lest it concern the health of her only son, and the young wife thought of her husband. Each thought of the same thing, whether he had an illness or not, or even if perhaps he were dead. But neither of them had thought at all of what the old man was to say, and he said thus :

' I went to that new capital, and I saw my son and his friends. I was there twenty full days, and I saw such things as I have never seen. I saw high houses, and I saw machines that run alone, and I saw many wonders, but these I will not speak of now because they are nothing to us. I saw what Yuan meant when he spoke of the women of that city. It is true that they were to me the strangest things of all. They go everywhere alone ; their hair is cut off like men's hair ; they are like men. At first I said, " These are evil women, and my son is lost among them." Then I saw that they were not evil. No, I have heard that women are changed in these days, and it is true. I had not believed it, since in this quiet place they are as they have always been.'

The old gentleman paused as if at some painful recollection, and he stared down at the floor.

' But how changed and by what changed ? ' asked the old lady, who had been listening to all this in the greatest astonishment.

' They have been to schools such as we sent our son to,' said the old man simply. ' They read and they write, and they have even gone to foreign countries. Yuan saw them there. I would not have believed it otherwise. But I went with him into a house of a friend of his, and the wife of his friend was such a one

as I tell you about, and at first I feared to look at her lest she were an evil woman. Then she spoke so gently and she was so courteous, and I saw her four children and they were courteous and clean also, and the house was in order although strange—but still ordered and clean—and I saw she was not evil at all. No, Yuan told me she could teach her children to read and to write and many things in books. I have not seen women like that before. Yet she sat there talking and laughing with the men, and they respected her. I could see they respected her.'

The two ladies listened to this in perfect silence. The young wife as she listened grew very pale, even more pale than she usually was, and she began to moisten her dry lips with the tip of her tongue.

The old gentleman went on in his gentle, hesitating way: 'Yuan lives in a house alone. It is not like this house. It is the strangest house—one house piled on top of another and full of glass windows!' The old gentleman stopped again and at last he continued with increasing agitation: 'I said to him, I said, "Yuan, your house has no mistress"; and I said, "Yuan, your wife shall come to you when you say, because we can manage, your mother and I"; and I said, "Yuan, she is your wife."'

The two ladies now sat perfectly motionless, their eyes fixed upon the old gentleman's downcast face. His yellow, thin old hand hovered incessantly over his beard, and he crossed and uncrossed his velvet-shod feet.

'What did he say?' asked the old lady, unable to bear the silence.

The old gentleman coughed and said in a sudden loud voice, 'He said, "My father, you see for yourself! How

could she manage a house like this, how be the sort of wife to me that I need? She cannot even read and write. I would be ashamed of her before my friends and their wives!" '

At this the young wife's face became as fixed as stone, and she did not move at all. Her eyes dropped to her hands folded in her lap, and so she sat motionless.

The old gentleman looked at her secretly and sighed heavily, and then he said, ' I could see what he means. Yes, I can see what he means. And yet I said also, and I still say again, where is there a woman like you, my daughter? You have been incomparable in our house.' Again he sighed, and then he added in a bitter voice such as no one had ever heard him use before: ' But you cannot read and write! It seems that in these days women must read and write.'

There was a loud cry from the little boy outside in the court where he was playing, a cry of rage and disappointment. If it had been a usual moment, his mother would have been instantly beside him. But she did not move. It was as if she did not hear him, even.

The old lady began to speak quickly and loudly. ' But what does he mean? But what does he expect? No, I know what all this fault-finding is. He has found one he likes better; that is all! I know, I know! I said there would be ill out of all this going into foreign places.'

The old gentleman raised his hand to command her silence. ' You do not understand, Mother-of-my-son,' he said. ' If there is such a person as you say, I did not see her. No, he even suggested a way. He said, " Let my wife go to a school for three years, a foreign school in the coast city where I know the foreign principal. I will write a letter there for her, and they know me and will

receive her for my sake, even though she is not a usual pupil. There she could learn to be more like the other women here. She will learn not only reading and writing but something of how to teach her children what they should know."'

At this the old lady began to laugh, a delicate, brittle, bitter laugh. But a pink flush rose in the young wife's face. She looked up suddenly, and it could be seen that her whole face was rosy, and her eyes were full of tears.

'It is true, I do not know anything,' she said humbly. 'Yuan is right. How am I fit for him? I will go to school if he says I must—as soon as I have sunned the winter furs and made things ready against the coming cold, I will go.' Then she added in a small, breathless voice, 'Well, I will go, if he must have me like others!'

But how can a mother of children go back and be a girl again? When she had torn herself away from the crying children and had looked back to see them leaning out of the gate calling after her, their arms outstretched, when she had set out upon her journey, the astounded old manservant beside her filled with disapproval of this strange adventure, when she had entered the schoolhouse and has taken her place in a row of beds in a dormitory and at a desk in a schoolroom, how could she forget what she was? True, there were those to be kind to her, even the strange pale foreigners who filled her with repulsion at their whiteness, but she had to sit in a room where little girls were, and she had to pore with them over books of big characters. She set herself to do it, her heart hard and aching, determined to do it all quickly. But when she tried to fix her mind upon these letters it would fly of its own accord to her home, and she could think of nothing else. She could only

wonder if they had thought to-day to put warmer coats upon the children since the wind blew so chill, and she fell to thinking of her duties in that house and whether they were done or not, and suddenly the hour would be gone and she had not learned what she ought to have learned, and the teacher was impatient and she was ashamed.

When night came it seemed dreadful to her that she must unclothe herself and lie down in a room where there were so many who were strange to her, and, when she did do it somehow and crept into the narrow, iron bed, she lay sleepless, longing for the little son with whom she had slept all his life. And the three years she must spend at this school were for ever to her.

Thus it went day after day, and she could not fix her mind. Many began to think her stupid, and one day she heard two teachers talking, and one of them said, not knowing she was near, 'She cannot learn. It is a shame, when her husband is so clever and learned. She is stupid by nature, and it is hopeless.' And the other one said regretfully—for they all liked the young wife—'It does seem quite hopeless'.

At this moment the school was called together to listen to a certain great man, who talked to them about the Revolution and the Three Principles of the People and about the new times that were come everywhere, and the young wife sat there among the others, her heart very sore at what she had heard the two teachers say. And she looked about the room suddenly, and she saw all the girls listening to the great man with keenest attention, and she looked especially at the oldest ones, already past the age that she was when she married, and far they were beyond her, how many years beyond! As she looked at them, it came to her that these were the

women of whom Yuan spoke. They could read and write as quickly as men. They understood perfectly what this great man told them, although she herself had no faintest idea of what he meant when he said such words as 'economics' and 'equilateral treaties' and many other words and phrases she had never heard. Yet she was ashamed to ask their meaning, because there was so much she did not know.

Then it came over her with a great despair that it was all no use. She could never become like these, no, not if she put her whole life to it. She could manage the old home and care for her children and for the parents of her husband, but this other thing she could not do. No, she must go home. And, as the man went on in his loud clear voice, she sat with her head down, thinking, planning, giving up. For in renunciation she saw a way for herself.

She said in her heart, 'I will go back to my home, and I will take care of my children and of the old two as I have done always, and I will ask my father to write to my husband: "I cannot be two women for you. If it be you must have the other kind also, then, although it breaks my heart in two, take one of that sort to be with you where you are; as for me, I will stay at home and care for your parents and take care of the children!"' When this came into her mind, although she was filled with a deep sadness, it was a quiet sadness, and she could bear it better than the despair, because she saw a way in which she could go home.

Immediately after the man had finished and the pupils were released, she went to the principal of the school, and she said, 'I think I must return to my home. My mind is continually on the children, and it is true I cannot learn anything here.'

Then, since this principal was a very kindly foreign woman, although too busy to think much of one student only, she said kindly enough, ' Perhaps you are right. Perhaps it would be better for you to go home. I am sorry.' And, although she smiled, it could be seen from her smile, even, that her mind was on other and more important things.

Then Yuan's wife set about putting her possessions together, and there was not a single person to mark her going away although she had been two months in this school, so entirely had she been outside the life of all. No, she put her things together and tied the strings of her bundle and paid what money she owed, and she went out of the gate and hired a passage on a boat that went up the river to that city where her home was. Although she had never been anywhere alone before, she did this all so steadfastly and quietly that no one looked at her, because she seemed so usual.

On the fourth day she entered the gate of her home once more, and they were all in the court of the peonies, and the old gentleman was directing the fertilizing of the roots before winter fell too cold. They looked at her in silence for a moment, scarcely believing it was she, and she began to speak quickly, lest one of them might say something before she told why she was come. She spoke in a voice at once pleading and firm, and she said, looking at her husband's father :

' I must give him up. I do give him up. Let him take a second one, of the kind he likes. Only let me stay here with you and with my mother and with my children as ever I have. I cannot learn anything at that foreign school. I tried, but my heart was continually asking my mind, " Have they drawn the curtains close about the children's bed—they are so easily chilled." Or, " How

does my son sleep without his mother—he stirs so much in his sleep—and will his sister wake to cover him when she is only a child herself ? " No, I am as I am, and I am only useful and clever when I am in this house with you whom I care for. Outside I am so stupid and awkward—you would not believe how stupid if you had not seen. Even the youngest ones in the school were more clever than I. It is true what Yuan says. I am fit only for this house and for you and for my children—I cannot—I can never leave here again.'

At the end she began to pour out these words in a quivering, half-weeping voice not at all like her usual way of speaking, and her pretty eyebrows fluttered above her frightened eyes. The old father and mother looked at each other and said nothing, but the two children, who had not understood what their mother meant at all, now flew to her, and the boy cried out, 'Now we shall have cakes to eat !'

And the little girl said coaxingly, 'When you go back to school, take me also, my mother ! I have always wanted to go to school !'

At last the old gentleman, seeing perfectly what the young wife meant, saw also that she was right, and he stroked his beard and sighed and said, 'My child, I can see how it has been. Therefore there is nothing to do except to write it all to Yuan. I will tell him, and we shall see if he will have mercy.'

So saying, he went to his room, sighing as he went, and the old lady said nothing at all, but she took her daughter-in-law's hand and patted it very gently, and after a time she leaned over and whispered so that the children could not hear, 'You are not to grieve ! I myself will speak to Yuan when he comes !'

The young wife smiled sadly at this, but she did not

answer. She knew there was some spirit now in Yuan which even a mother's words could not move.

But she took up again with ineffable joy the old duties of the home. In the night she woke up sometimes in terror, thinking for an instant that she was back in the school, her bed one in rows of others exactly like it. Then her little son would stir, perhaps, and, when he tossed his fat legs across her, she came to herself and held herself ecstatic and breathlessly still, lest she should wake him.

She found in these first days a score of things undone about the house. The cauldrons had not been scraped of their soot in the kitchens, and the fire was thus kept from the food and the fuel wasted. The candle-stands were caked with the tallow of the dripping candles. There were many such things that servants' eyes do not see, and it had been so long since the old lady noticed such affairs that she also did not see.

Day after day the young wife busied herself until the house was as she liked it again. They never mentioned Yuan now nor talked of her ever going away any more. If she spoke—but she seldom did—it was to say something to a child or else to make a remark about some household need. The old gentleman, watching her, saw her look frightened for an instant if he began to speak unexpectedly, until she heard what he said, and he told his old wife, 'We must never send this child of ours away again. You see how she is—trembling and so thin. How she has suffered!'

He did not reproach her at all. Nevertheless, he waited in heaviness of heart for his son's letter. The truth was he had not yet told Yuan that his wife was willing for him to take another woman. He was sure that he could explain to the young man once more how

it was, how sheltered his wife had been in this old house, how her life had entwined itself about them all, how, although she was so swift and capable at home and made all of them so comfortable, she could not adapt herself to a change so great as the life he now lived, and how, in the presence of those lively, learned women, she would shrink and fade away and none would ever see or care what she was. No, Yuan must be content to have her stay in the old home with his parents, and he could come back when he would and spend some time himself with his friends. So the old father had written, and he waited for his son's answer.

It came very quickly, and it was not an unkind letter. No, Yuan was not unkind, and he said only this : ' You have dealt so very gently with the wife you gave me and you have understood so well what her nature is that I ask only to be shown the same gentleness and understanding. My father, I was eighteen when you married me to one I never saw. It was an age at which I would have taken any woman, and I was pleased enough with the one you gave me. If I had continued at home and gone into business with you, I should always have been content with her. The men of our house are not given to many women. I would have lived with this one only, even as you and my mother have lived together all these years, with increasing joy and peace as your old age comes on. But I went away, and you were willing and even ambitious for me, and I have pushed on into another life, one as remote as the stars from the quiet city in which you all live. I need a companion in this life—from which I cannot now separate myself—one who shares it and with whom I can speak. I have nothing to say to the one you chose for me—she has nothing to say to me. We have no common life about

which we can talk. I could never be content again with this one, seeing what women may become in these days. I can hire a servant to give me what that one does. I want a woman who is trained as I am, who is a part, with me, of the new day. Be gentle with me, my father!'

The old gentleman did not read this letter to the two ladies, either. He thought to himself that surely he did not need his son to beg him to be gentle. He read the letter over three times, groaning as he did so, since he understood, and yet what could he do?

Being driven to extremity, he wrote again, and he said: 'She is willing for you to take another after your own heart, and she will stay on in this house and care for us all as she has always.' And he thought the matter ended and the uttermost done. Therefore he was not prepared for the answer that came back.

Yuan wrote: 'It is not lawful in these times nor becoming for a man to have more than one wife, and, moreover, the new woman will not be a second wife. I must first divorce the old one; for the new one must be the only wife. But I shall be very generous, and I will pay the old one well, and she shall not want. I do not want her to suffer at all.'

The old father could scarcely restrain himself when he read these words his son had written. His eyes started, and he read it over again to make sure he had really understood it all. Then he wrote back in a great anger, forgetting himself completely: 'These are strange times when a man can cast his wife off like this so that she has nothing left, neither respect nor place among men and no place in her husband's home! Better the old days when she lost nothing but her husband's favour and had all else left to her, and her life could go on in her

house. My son, you have written what is unworthy of you!'

Then, pulling his straggling beard, he waited in the utmost impatience for an answer. During these days, the old gentleman grew thinner even than he was and more haggard, and he could only steep himself more in his opium than he had ever allowed himself to do before, because otherwise he could not sleep at all. When the letter came from his son, he went into his own room and he tore open the envelope, but, when he drew the letter forth, he could not read it, since his excitement made him giddy and he had to lean his head upon his hands to recover himself. The young wife had stolen in and seen him thus, and she poured out a cup of tea. She was extremely pale, but she did not ask anything concerning the letter that lay there. Well she knew whose it was, but she would ask nothing now—only wait for what must come.

This time the letter was brief and plain. 'My father, you cannot, I see, understand. We had better be perfectly open with each other. I have begun the bill of divorcement, and I am betrothed now to a young woman who was in the same school with me in the foreign country. Like me, she was betrothed to one she never saw, but she was braver than I and repudiated the bond. We are made for each other. I shall be generous in everything to the other one, but we are no longer husband and wife. Do not blame me. Remember, I tried—I sent her to school, and it is not my fault if she would not make the effort to stay. If she had cared, she would have made the effort. I do not blame myself. There are many who do what I do to-day. Indeed, the lot of the new women is as hard as that of any. The men whom they should wed, the men of their generation and

training, are already wed, as I was, in childhood. Some one must suffer, and it is better for the country and for the children to come that the educated women be the wives and mothers. But I shall be generous to that other one. I will give her all you think she needs. Only she must go away to some other place and live there, because she has no more right in my home. When I come back with my wife to visit you and my mother, it will be an embarrassment to us if she is there.'

The young wife lingered about the room, silently waiting. She waited, hoping that the old gentleman would tell her something that was in the letter. But he only motioned to her to leave him. He would tell her nothing at all. No, his mouth felt dry, and he was faint, and he sat for a long time alone, sipping the hot tea she poured for him before she went.

Then he mixed his ink carefully and drew his brush and paper to him again, and he wrote: 'My son, if it had been as it was with myself when young and my father, I would have commanded, and you would have obeyed. But well I know I cannot command; for you would not obey. No, it is I who obey now. In these days and times sons do not obey, and so fathers must not command. No, I say only this, if it must be as you say, let the poor child who has been our daughter all these years live on here. Though she be not your wife, yet must she be our daughter. We are not changed to her. We do not know this new one. We should be ill at ease in her presence. I was afraid of those swift, learned women I saw in the capital who are your friends and the wives of your friends. I am not used to these women. No, let our daughter live here with us and care for your children, and let her never know she is divorced from

you. I will not tell her, and in this quiet place she need not know.'

When his letter was written and sent, the old gentleman seemed more at ease again. Nevertheless, it seemed to him best that he should tell the young wife something of what had passed, but not all. Therefore he called her to him that evening when the children were asleep and when he sat with his old wife in the middle room with the lighted candle on the table between them. The young wife came in when she was called, and, as she always did, she saw to their tea that it was hot before she seated herself in her accustomed place below her parents-in-law.

The old gentleman began: 'My daughter, I have written to my son, and our letters have been like birds flying north and south. The end of it all is that my son has accepted your generosity, and he does take another wife, but you are to stay here freely, my child, in this house that you know, and we shall be as we were before, except that we shall not see Yuan so often as we might otherwise have seen him, since his life is now elsewhere.'

Then for the first time did this young wife begin to weep openly before these old two. 'I have dealt ill with you,' she sobbed. 'I have repaid so badly all your kindness! It is because I am as I am that you cannot see your son so much and that he is separated from his home!'

The old lady opened her eyes very wide; for she, even, had not seen her daughter-in-law weep before—no, not in all these years, not even when the little boy was near to death. She exclaimed with mild heat: 'I shall speak to Yuan myself—I shall see to it myself—I shall see if sons no longer obey their parents!'

But the old gentleman shook his head and was as

patient with her as if she were a child. 'No,' he said gently. 'No one has done wrong—not you, my child, who have always done the best you could; not Yuan, who is still generous as he ever was. No,' he hesitated and stroked his beard with his pale old hand, 'I cannot say whose fault all this is nor why these strange times have come when all is so changed, so that even a good wife is not what a man wants.'

'It all comes of not heeding the gods,' said the old lady with obstinacy. 'If one does one's duty by the gods——'

The old gentleman closed his eyes, waiting for her to finish, because he had heard this many times before. Then he continued, as if she had not spoken: 'But you may live on here, child, where your home is, and we shall live from day to day and watch the peonies bud and the lilies, and we have the children. There are not many so happy as we.'

Thus he comforted them.

But it was not to be so. On the sixth day from this day, as they were eating their night meal together, there was an unusual noise at the gate, and the manservant cried out, 'The young master is come!'

They looked up from the table, and there Yuan was, standing before them. He was weary and dusty and looked thinner than they had ever seen him. There was a constraint upon him, and he spoke hastily to his parents without noticing anyone else. It was as if he laboured under some task which he hated but which he must perform and complete. He wrung out a towel from the basin of hot water a servant brought in, and he wiped his face and hands quickly and sat down to the table, and, taking a bowl and chopsticks, he began to eat rapidly. The young wife hastened to fetch hot

rice and hot dishes, and this he acknowledged with a short nod. When he had eaten a bowl—for he was never one to eat much—he turned to the others who were waiting for him to finish, and he began to speak quickly and with indrawing breath, as if he knew what he had to say and must say it and yet dreaded to say it.

He turned to his father and he spoke thus: 'My father, I must return at once, even to-night, and so it is better to say at once before us all what I have to say. This passing back and forth of letters is too slow. The matter begun must be finished quickly. The bill of divorcement is drawn, and it must be signed by the two of us to be divorced. My wedding is set for the sixth day of next month. It is better for this one, here, to withdraw to some quiet good place with a relative, because it will be too difficult for me to bring my wife home—I want you to see her, my father and my mother! When you see her you will understand!'

Now the young wife heard all this, and it was for the first time, since she had not known at all that she was to be divorced. She turned a strange white face to him, and she said, 'But I have nowhere to go at all. There is no relative who will take me and the two children.'

Yuan had not looked at her, but, when she mentioned the children, he looked at her quickly and said, in surprise, 'But naturally I would not ask you to take my children. They are my responsibility, and, when I am married, they will come to my house where they can receive the benefits of my wife's education.' Then, as he saw her look, he cried out in sudden hostility, 'Do not say it is my fault! I gave you your chance, and you threw it away.'

The young wife continued to gaze at him as he spoke, but as if she did not know it and did not see him. Twice

she essayed to speak, and her eyebrows fluttered above her eyes, but not a sound came from her lips. The old man was looking down, stroking his beard, his face as grey as ashes. The old lady began to weep suddenly and secretly.

But Yuan turned to his children and said, 'Son, you would like to come with me to the new capital, would you?'

The little boy began to leap up and down crying out, in ecstasy, 'I shall go on a boat—I shall go on a boat——'

The little girl asked her father, her face tense with anxiety, 'But shall I go?'

'Yes, you too,' said Yuan heartily.

The little girl turned to her mother, her face flushing with joy. 'Then I shall go to school,' she said with grave pleasure in her eyes; 'I have always wanted to go to school.'

But not one of them looked at the young wife to see how she was. If they had looked, they might not have seen anything except that her pallor was deeper even than usual, and, since she was always silent, her silence was not strange. None would have seen how she trembled, unless it were the old gentleman, and he sat there stroking his beard, grey as ashes, his eyes fixed on the floor, since he would not look at her. The old lady had wept noiselessly, wiping her eyes with her sleeve, and she sat quiet also.

Yuan was delighted with his son's merriment, and he said, 'You shall go on a train, and you shall see great wide streets and automobiles and aeroplanes and all the things you have never seen and can never see here!'

The child could not contain himself. He began to

run about in circles and to cry out, 'When shall we go? I want to go—I want to go——'

The young wife looked at this son of hers and then at the little girl. The little girl caught her mother's eye and smiled dreamily and said, 'I have always wanted to go to school, mother!'

Then the young wife could bear no more. No, it was no use for her to say anything. By the greyness of the old father's face, by the old mother's weeping, the young wife knew it was no use for her to say anything at all. Yuan caught his son to him as the child ran past him, and he hugged him and smelled of his sweet flesh, and the child was delighted with his father and clung to him and looked arrogantly at his mother.

Then Yuan said to her earnestly, his cheek beside the child's, 'Of course you shall never want. I shall always take care that you have plenty of money.'

The young wife gave him a full, proud look. But he did not see it, for his eyes were fastened on his son again. With the fickleness of childhood the boy and the girl thought at this moment of their father only, and without their noticing it their mother slipped away from them all.

She went into the room where she had slept with the two children during all these years, and she sat down heavily upon her bed, it came over her in one complete moment what her life was, what it now must be. It did not take her one moment more to know what she must do for them all. Yes, for Yuan and for the children she must do it—for herself, also.

She rose and drew open a drawer in the table, and from it she took out a silk girdle that she wore customarily with her holiday garments. It was of soft white silk, very strong and soft. She climbed upon the

massive bed, and with steady hands she tied one end of the girdle about her throat and she reached and tied the other end around the beam that ran just above the bed. From the middle room she heard her son's voice crying merrily, 'And shall I ride in an aeroplane, too ?'

The old father had begun to speak in a soft, sad, pleading voice, but she could not hear what he said. She did not try to hear. No, she tied the girdle firmly and steadily, and she took one long look about this beloved room. Then she pressed her lips together and closed her eyes. With quiet decision she thrust one foot off the bed and leaped into the air and felt the girdle tighten and jerk. She remembered one thing for an instant, one more duty : it was that she must not let her hands fly out for support. She clasped them convulsively upon her breast. The blood pounded in her ears, and her ears were filled with the roar. Like a voice very far away she heard the child say over and over, laughing, 'I shall ride in an aeroplane !'

But this sound died away too, and she heard no more. Her hands dropped.

THE OLD MOTHER

THE old mother sat at the table with her son and his wife and their two children. Their noon meal was being served by the elder housemaid. The old mother sat very quietly with her hands folded in her lap, and she looked with subdued eagerness at one dish after another as these were brought on the table. There was one dish she liked especially, but she said nothing. She knew that it had not been prepared for her, but only by accident, since her son and his wife had often told her they could not eat the dishes she wanted because they were such coarse country fare. Therefore, the pepper and beans were not here to-day because she liked peppers.

As she gazed at this dish her mouth watered. She was very hungry. She would have liked to take up her chopsticks and plunge them in the peppers and take up all she could and pile them on the bowl of rice the maid had placed before her. But this she had been taught not to do. Yes, in the four years she had been living with her son and his wife she had learned many things. Therefore she waited with such patience as she could until her son's wife said formally, after the food had all been placed on the table:

'Mother, will you take what you wish?'

Nevertheless, the son's wife contrived, as she passed the bowls one after the other to the old mother, to emphasize the fact that there were in each bowl extra chopsticks, and she watched sharply lest the old mother forget and dip her own into the common dish. It was true it had taken a long time for the old mother to

learn not to do this. All her life long as farmer's daughter and farmer's wife she had not seen it held unmannerly to put one's own chopsticks into the dish. No, her son and his wife were the only ones she knew who thought it so. They had come back together from foreign parts, where doubtless the people were savage and filthy, and they had cried out in horror on the very first day when she had carefully and decently licked her chopsticks clean between her lips before she dipped them into the dish.

At first hearing their cry she had stared in astonishment, her chopsticks suspended above the bowl, and she said, 'What? What?' There must be, she thought, something untoward in the dish, a shred of hair or cloth or a stick or something that even the best of cooks will drop sometimes, not knowing it, into the food as they cook it. But her son had cried out:

'You must use the extra chopsticks—you must not dip in with your own that you have had in your mouth!'

She was greatly outraged then, and she said with indignation:

'Do you think I have some vile disease, and are you afraid of me?'

When they had tried to explain about some sort of small things, too small even to be seen, but that pass from one person to another and carry illness, she sat stiff and unbelieving, and she said over and over as they told her:

'I do not believe I have these things on me. I have never seen worms on myself.'

When they answered, 'Ah, but they are too small to be seen!' she had said in triumph, 'Then how do you know I have them on me if you cannot see them?'

This she had thought victory, but her son had said as firmly as though he were his own father:

'There is no use in discussing this matter, I will not have these untidy ways in my house, I will not have it!'

The old mother was very hurt then and she sat in silence and ate nothing at all but her rice, refraining from every bowl of meat and vegetable, although she suffered cruelly in doing this, for all her life she had a good and hearty appetite for her food, and now that she was old her meals were her chiefest pleasure.

Nevertheless, she had had to submit. Once she even saw her son's wife do such a thing as this. The maid had brought into the room one night and placed upon the supper-table a bowl of very hot melon-soup, a dish the old mother loved, and she was overcome with pleasure at the sight. She forgot all else and she plunged her porcelain spoon into the soup and supped up the delicious brew and dipped her spoon in quickly for more. Instantly the son's wife had risen from her seat, and taking the soup she went to the open window and poured it out into the garden. There was the good soup gone!

When the old mother stammered in her astonishment, 'But why—but why——' stammering and wondering, the son's wife pressed her thin lips together and answered very quietly, 'We do not care to drink after you.'

Then the old mother grew angry. Yes, she had dared to be angry in those early days. She cried out stoutly:

'I shall not poison you, I dare say!'

But the son's wife had answered yet more quietly and very cruelly:

'You do not even use a tooth-brush.'

At this the old mother replied with great dignity:

'I have rinsed my mouth all my life in the way I was

taught, when I rise in the morning and after every meal, and in my day we never considered that this was not enough.'

At this her son said contemptuously:

'In your day! Do not speak of your day, if you please. It is such a day as yours that we must change altogether if this country is to be considered less than barbarous among other nations.'

But the old mother had no idea what her son meant by such talk as this. At first when he made such remarks she had laughed in her big country way, and it seemed to her he was like a little boy talking high words he had heard somewhere and did not understand himself. But when she saw his cold patience with her and his gravity when she laughed at him, and when she saw the respect that visitors to the house paid to him, and how they but tolerated her for his sake, she ceased her laughing without knowing she did, since it is very hard for one person to laugh alone when there are only grave faces everywhere about.

Yes, she had learned to eat in silence and to wait until she was served. She did so now, and when she had eaten a bowl of rice she rose silently and went to her own room across the hall. But there at the door she paused. The truth was that she was still hungry. Her years on the farm had made her used to her three bowls of rice at least, and she felt empty and weak with the one scanty bowl in her. They had used big bowls on the farm, too, big blue and white bowls of pottery, but her son had the little fine bowls city people use. Yes, she was still very hungry. But she did not dare to eat all she wanted lest her son say in his half-sneering way, as he did sometimes:

'You eat what labourers do! I never heard of a lady

who ate like this. What do you do that you need so much as this ? '

Yet he did not begrudge her the food, that she knew. No, how could he, since he earned every month for his teaching more than his father and mother had earned in a whole year on the land ? No, it was because he was ashamed of her. She knew he was ashamed of her. When they invited guests to dinners they made excuses to have her eat in her own room. Well, at least she could eat as she liked there.

But now she was still hungry. She turned and crept noiselessly down the hall and out of the back door, across the court, to the kitchen. She went in smiling timidly at the servants, and she took a bowl and dipped some rice out of the half-emptied cauldron where it was. Then she went to the table where the left-over foods were for the servants to eat. The dish of peppers was there also, but she did not dare to touch them, for there was but a little left, and the servants would not be pleased if she took it. She helped herself therefore only to some of the cabbage, of which there was plenty left. Then she went back to her room, not daring to glance at any of the maids as she went, and frightened lest she meet her son or his wife. As for the servants, she knew they did not like to share their food with her thus, but still they pitied her somewhat, too, and were tolerant of her, while they scorned her, taking her side against their exacting mistress.

Once in her own room the old mother closed the door softly and slipped the bolt. Then she sat down to enjoy the food. She ate it greedily to the last grain of rice, and rising, she washed the bowl and chopsticks in her wash-basin, so that no extra trouble might be given the maids.

When she had eaten she went to a small tin box that stood among several others on her table and opened it and took out of it a little piece of cold rice. This she had saved from yesterday. Now she ate that also, munching it in her jaws. She kept all bits of food she could get in these little boxes lest she be hungry out of meal time. Then she sat down and picked her teeth with an old silver pin she wore in her hair.

After the old mother had sat thus a while she rose and opened her door and peered out. She did this to see if either of the two children were about. She was afraid to call them to her since her son's wife did not like her children to come into their grandmother's room. She said, when the old mother reproached her for this :

'You never open your windows and the air in your room is unhealthy for them. You will keep those old musty clothes, and there are mice everywhere because of those bits of food you hoard.'

'Those coats were my own mother's and far too good to be thrown away,' answered the old mother. 'One cannot throw away good things, not clothing and food, surely ! If you were as old as I am you would know that poverty comes suddenly, and when one does not expect it.'

But to this the son's wife had only smiled her little chill smile. Nevertheless, she called to the children to come with her for some cause or other, if she saw them go to the grandmother's room. Therefore it became one of the pastimes of this old woman's life to leave her door open and see if she could entice one of the children to her. Besides, they were such dear little things, so fat and so fragrant. She loved to nuzzle her old nose into their little creased necks and make them laugh helplessly.

When these children were born she was very glad. She had always loved children, and although in her early youth she had married a poor man, a man who must earn their rice by extreme labour on the land, still she welcomed every child that came to her. Yes, even the girls she welcomed, and she kept every one except the one her mother-in-law had commanded must not be saved because it was so poor a year and so without harvests that they did not know what death lay ahead for any of them. It was true that many had starved that year, and all had come too near it.

But to this day the old mother remembered with sorrow the little girl she had seen but the moment it was born, and never again, and she counted it as one among the four she had lost altogether. Yes, she counted it as one among the four the gods had taken from her.

Of her three children who had lived to grow up, this son was the only son left, for the eldest had died of a cholera eight years ago in the very midst of his manhood. The third was a daughter whom she never saw now, since the woman lived in another village than her old one, and was married to a poor man, and it is not to be expected that a daughter's husband will welcome his wife's mother when she has a son to care for her.

Therefore she had only this one son left, but she and her old husband had always considered him the finest they had. Yes, when this son was a baby he was the cleverest and the most wilful child of all. From the first they had said to each other that they must give this child more than the others and make a scholar out of him, and so her husband had taken him to a foreigners' school in the nearest city when the boy was not more than ten years old, and they had left him there for ten

years. This was because the learning was good enough there, and they did not mind, as some did, that he had to learn a foreign religion of some sort with his other books, because the tuition was very little, and after a year or so when the boy did very well, nothing at all. Yes, those foreigners gave him everything. At first the boy had come home for New Year holidays and in the summer, but after a few years he did not wish to do this, because he had become so fine a scholar he was not comfortable any more in the earthen country-house. Well, those foreigners put it into his head even to go to other countries to study even more, and they gave him some money to help him, but not enough either. She remembered that very day when her son had come in unexpectedly and said to her and to his father while they were planting the rice in the water beds :

'Mother, I am going away to foreign parts to study more. The foreigners will give me some money, but not enough, and I want to ask you and my father for all you can give me, and in your old age I will care for you uncomplainingly.'

At first it had seemed the wildest thing for him to do, but she and her husband had talked here and there with every one about it, and there were many who said :

'We have heard that if men go to foreign parts they get such learning that when they return they make vast sums of money every month. If you let him go you will not need to work in your old age.'

Yes, so they heard, and they let him go then, seeing that at that time they had their good elder son, who was a small shopkeeper in the nearest market town, and he did enough business to care for himself and his wife. They let this boy of theirs go without betrothing him,

even, before he went, because he was so lordly and so wilful with all his learning, and they so much more ignorant than he, that they did not know how to force him nor even answer all his great talk.

Well, he had married himself in the new way that men did nowadays, without asking his parents. He married himself while he was in that foreign country, not to be sure, to a foreigner, but she was the same as a foreigner, this pale, finicky woman who spread woollen cloth on her floors and hung cloth at her windows, and who would wash her children all over every day, as though such dear little things could be so dirty!

Well, when her son's return was yet two years off, her good old man died. A lusty, hearty old fellow he was, and yet he died all of a sudden one cold winter, and he died of a pain in his chest and a fever, and before she could call a doctor, thinking it would right itself and he unwilling to go to the expense. There he was, dead, and she had to pay for his coffin and his funeral, and there was nothing for it but to sell some of the land, because they had kept themselves so pinched to send money to the boy in foreign parts.

But she was a woman alone now, and she could not till all the land, anyway, and so she had sold a good big piece, and the old man had a good coffin. Yes, and she was glad she had bought him a new blue coat to lie dead in, and it was better than any coat he had ever worn in his life.

That very year in the autumn her elder son died too, and since he had no children, his wife went back to her own people, and the old mother had no one left except that son in foreign parts. No, she had only him left, and so when he wrote for more money and he must have more money, she sold the land to the last foot and gave

the silver to the foreigner to send to her son. Once an old neighbour said to her:

'It is better not to sell all your land, for even sons do not love so well a mother who brings them nothing.'

But she was not afraid; she answered:

'He is a good son, and it is all his land anyway, now, and if he needs it, let him have it. As for me, I am not afraid. He has said he will care for me without complaining, and I am not afraid he will not have a place for me in his house.' She laughed as she said this, for she was sure of her son.

But now she sighed as she thought of this answer. Well, here she was in her son's house. It was a very fine house. Every visitor who came exclaimed how fine a foreign house it was. There was a top floor above this one and a stair going to it, but they let her have this room on the lower floor because she could not climb the stairs, or if she did manage to get up somehow, she must be led down again. But when they wanted to be rid of her they took the children and went upstairs and sat there and left her alone. Oh, she knew them very well! Although they thought her so old that she did not see through them, yet she saw.

Suddenly the two children came, fresh and rosy from their sleep, into the room across the hall from her open door. She saw them sit down to play with a toy. Both of them were little girls. When the younger one was born the old mother had cried out to her son:

'This one should have been a male!'

But her son had replied very stiffly:

'We do not feel in this way any longer. In these times sons and daughters are equal.'

The old mother laughed noiselessly and contemptuously to herself as she thought of what her son had

said. Yes, but suppose every one gave birth to girls; who would father the next generation? There must be both male and female. Fools!

When she turned again, she saw the younger child looking at her, and she smiled at her. It was true that these were the sweetest children, and of the two she loved the baby better. She longed suddenly to hold the little round thing in her arms. Yes, she must have her old face there in that sweet soft spot beneath the baby's chin. She clucked softly and cautiously with her tongue to the child and the child stared back at her uncertainly. Then the old mother thought of something. She rose and went to one of her many little tin boxes and opened it. In it she found a little sweet nut cake that she had put there ten days or so before. It had a film of mould over it, but this she blew off and wiped the cake clean with her hands. Then she held it out silently to the baby.

The child looked at it and, having but newly learned to walk, she rose painstakingly and toddled to the old mother, holding out her hand for the cake. The old mother seized the little thing and gave her the cake and the child ate it gravely. The old mother closed the door then, and sat down on her bed, the child in her arms, and she buried her wrinkled face in the little warm neck. She hugged the sweet morsel to her. Ah, little children—little children——

But they had already taught the children to hate her. Yes, for the older child, left alone, went and told her mother, and suddenly the door opened and the son's wife came in swiftly and she said very gently, but with what cold, compelled gentleness:

'Mother, thank you, but it is time now for the child to go out into the garden.' Then, seeing crumbs

upon the child's red lips, she cried out, forgetting her gentleness, 'What have you given her to eat?'

The old mother tried to answer boldly, for after all, how could a little sweet cake hurt any one?

'It is only a little cake I had.'

But the child's mother seized the child and pried her little jaws open.

'Nuts!' she said angrily. Then she pressed her own lips together and said no more, but she took the child in her arms and carried her away, and the child cried with fright.

The old mother sat down again in great indignation. She told herself that she had done nothing wrong—nothing at all wrong. Nevertheless, she had been so subdued by these four years that she felt a vague guiltiness within herself. She sat muttering in her room. Yes, a little small sweet cake such as all children love, and it is called a crime! Poor little things that must be fed on such pap as their mother gave them!

Then as she sat there muttering she heard a noise. At the door stood the elder child. The old mother forgot the cake and the trouble it had brought her, and she smiled and reached out her hand to the child. But the child shook her head and backed away from her and the old mother's hand dropped and she murmured in a whisper:

'They have taught you, too, haven't they?' And she smiled painfully.

But the child only stared at her half-afraid, and sat down again to play, with her back to the old woman. Every now and again she turned and stole a glance at her grandmother.

Nevertheless, that night the younger child became ill. Whether it could have been the small nut cake or what

it was, the child fell ill. The young mother tended the child through the night, and the son was sleepless also, but by the next morning the child was over the worst and could rest. The old mother when she heard this from a passing servant was much relieved, for she had been very much frightened by the bustle in the night. So therefore when she came into the dining-room for the morning meal and found only her son there, she said to him as she seated herself at the table:

'Ah, it was nothing serious, then! Children will have these little illnesses. I remember when you were small also——'

But he interrupted her. She saw at once that he had something to say to her, and that he was very pale and angry. Instantly she could not eat any more and she put down her chopsticks. She stared at him. She tried to remember that he was her son, and but a younger son, and she tried to remember him when he was a small, crying child, coming to find her breast. But she could not. It seemed to her he had always been what he was now, a very proud and learned man, dressed in these foreign clothes; he wore his gold spectacles on his nose. He was a merciless and unsmiling man, and she was desperately afraid of him. For a moment she even wished her daughter-in-law were there, for sometimes she stopped her husband when he spoke too harshly to his own mother.

But there were only the two of them, mother and son. He had even sent the maids from the room. . . . Would he kill her then—his old mother? . . . He was saying:

'I do not wish to be unjust, my mother. I know my duty and you have your place in my house. Nevertheless, if you are to be here, you must do as I say.

You shall not spoil my children. I am responsible for my children. Yesterday in spite of all we have begged you before, and we have told you that you are not to give the children food, and particularly not any one of those stale bits you keep in your room as though we starved you——' He stopped an instant to control an old irritation. Then he went on very coldly: 'In spite of our wishes you gave the younger child a thing she had never eaten in the best of times. Last night she was ill.'

'It was a very small, good cake,' muttered the old mother, still rebellious.

'But we have asked you to give her nothing,' repeated the son firmly.

Suddenly the old mother gave way. She could not bear any more, and she began to weep aloud and to sob out as she wept.

'I shall go away! Oh, let me go away! I have no home here—I must go away!'

The son waited patiently until she grew a little quieter. Then he said:

'Mother, be reasonable. How can you go away? Where will you go in the whole world?'

'I can go to my daughter's house!' cried the old mother violently. 'Yes, I will go and hire myself out to my daughter's husband. I am strong yet, and I can gather grass on the hills and pick up manure and look after the children and sweep the floor and burn the fuel in the oven. I could earn the little I eat!'

But the son smiled bitterly. 'Do you think I have not thought of that?' he said. 'Last year I wrote and offered them money, yes, so much a month, if they would take you, because my wife felt it was so hard to have you here because you will not learn or adapt yourself to our house. They answered that, even so, it was

more than they could do and that their house was full with their own children.'

At this the old mother fell suddenly silent. It was true she had not really thought they would ever have her. But all these years it had been something to say. Yes, when she was angry at her son or his wife she would mutter to the servants behind their back, or to any one who came to the house, or even to a vendor who was selling fish or vegetables at the kitchen door:

'I have a daughter who has land and I can go there if I do not like it here with my son and his wife!'

But now she knew she could never say this again. No, for if she did her son's eyes would fall on her with bitter knowledge. He had offered to pay out money to have his mother out of his house, and they would not have her, no, not though they were paid for it. She dropped her head and listened as her son went on.

'You see, my mother, my wife is an educated woman and you are but an ignorant country woman. I can say this since we are alone. It is right that my children should be reared in modern ways. I desire it so. My house cannot be like the house you lived in. We will not spit on the floors and let the fowls run in and out, and my children cannot eat this and that as your children did.'

At this the last spark of rebellion rose in the old mother's heart and she cried out, feebly:

'Yet you are one of my children!'

The son said forcibly and plainly then:

'I do not care to lose four out of seven of my children as you did.'

At this the old mother drew herself up trembling and looked at him once more and cried out:

'Do you accuse me of killing my own children, then?

The son said loudly, as though his patience were ended and he could not keep his voice quiet any more:

'I accuse you only of ignorance and of unwillingness to learn better!'

He rose, then. He had no more to say. Yes, he was going out and leaving her there alone with those last bitter words. She must stay him somehow. She shrieked after him in her old quavering voice:

'Well, I can die—at any rate, I can die! I can hang myself——'

Her son turned swiftly at that. He looked at her in great anger and he saw some sort of final courage and despair on that old face he knew so well.

'You say that to me!' he shouted in a sudden, towering rage. 'You dare say that to me! You would disgrace me and have it known everywhere that my mother hanged herself in my own house!'

He pressed a bell fixed in the wall and a maidservant came in. He strove to say in his usual voice, very cold and firm:

'My mother needs a maidservant of her own. There are signs she is failing in her mind. Hire a maid who shall not leave her day or night. I put this responsibility on you.'

The maid bowed; and he went away.

It was not the first time the servants had heard high voices in this house, and they could be heard even without listening at keyholes. They knew well enough what had happened to-day. But the maid was pleased to have it turn this way. She had often complained to her master and mistress that their old mother was more trouble than a child, and that there should be a special servant to care for her as children have. Therefore she was glad now, and she had in mind a sister of hers who

would be willing and pleased to have the work. But the old mother turned trembling and sobbing to the servant maid.

'He will not even let me die! I cannot even die!' she wailed, and she went stumbling towards the servant as a child does who must go for comfort to any one in its desperate need.

But the servant led her to a seat and said briskly and carelessly, in haste to be away:

'There—there, old lady! You do not appreciate your son. He gives you shelter and food and clothes, and you really ought to try to be a little more—yes, yes, he is a very good, filial son. Everybody says so!'

THE FRILL

'MY dear, the old way to manage these native tailors is to be *firm* !'

Mrs. Lowe, the postmaster's wife, settled herself with some difficulty into the wicker rocking-chair upon the wide veranda of her house. She was a large woman, red-faced from more food than necessary and little exercise over the ten-odd years she had spent in a port town on the China coast, and now, as she looked at her caller and thus spoke, her square, hard-fleshed face grew a little redder. Beside her stood a Chinese manservant, who had just announced in a mild voice:

'Tailor have come, missy.'

Little Mrs. Newman looked at her hostess with vague admiration.

'I'm sure I wish I had your way with them, Adeline,' she murmured, fanning herself slowly with a palm leaf fan that she had taken from a small wicker table at her elbow. She went on in a plaintive, complaining way, 'Sometimes I think it is scarcely worth while to bother with new clothes, although they are so cheap here, especially if you buy the native silks. But it is so much trouble to have them made, and these tailors say—my dear, my tailor promises me faithfully he will make a dress in three days, and then he doesn't come for a week or two! Robert says I look disgraceful and that my clothes aren't fit for a rummage sale, but I tell him if he only knew the trouble it is to get a native tailor to do anything and then the weird way they cut the sleeves—oh, dear!' Her weak voice dwindled and ended in a sigh and she fanned herself a trifle more quickly for a

second or two and wiped the perspiration from her upper lip with her handkerchief.

'Watch me, now,' said Mrs. Lowe commandingly. She had a deep, firm voice and round, hard, grey eyes, set a little near together beneath closely-waved, dead brown hair. She turned these eyes upon the Chinese manservant as he stood looking down decorously at the floor, his head drooping slightly, and said, 'Boy, talkee tailor come this side!'

'Yes, missy,' murmured the servant, and disappeared.

Almost instantly there was the sound of soft steady footsteps through the open doors, and from the back of the house through the hall there came, following the manservant, the tailor. He was a tall man, taller than the servant, middle-aged, his face quiet with a sort of closed tranquillity. He wore a long robe of faded blue grass-cloth, patched neatly at the elbows and very clean. Under his arm he carried a bundle wrapped in a white cloth. He bowed to the two white women and then, squatting down, put this bundle upon the floor of the veranda and untied its knots. Inside was a worn and frayed fashion-book from some American company and a half-finished dress of a spotted blue and white silk. This dress he shook out carefully and held up for Mrs. Lowe to see. From its generous proportions it could be seen that it was made for her. She surveyed it coldly and with hostility, searching its details.

Suddenly she spoke in a loud voice, 'No wantchee that collar, tailor! I have talkee you wantchee frill—see, so fashion!' She turned the pages of the book rapidly to a section devoted to garments for ample women. 'See, all same fashion this lady. What for you makee flat collar? No wantchee—no wantchee—take it away!'

Upon the tailor's calm patient face a perspiration broke forth. 'Yes, missy,' he said faintly. And then he pressed his lips together slightly and took a breath and began, 'Missy, you first talkee frill, then you say no frill. Other day you say wantchee flat collar, frill too fat.'

He looked imploringly at the white woman. But Mrs. Lowe waved him away with a fat, ringed hand and began to rock back and forth vigorously in her wicker chair. She raised her voice.

'No, you talkee lie, tailor,' she cried sternly. 'I know how I talkee. I never say I wantchee flat collar—never! No lady have flat collar now. What for you talkee so fashion?'

'Yes, missy,' said the tailor. Then brightening somewhat he suggested, 'Have more cloth, missy. Suppose I makee frill, never mind.'

But Mrs. Lowe was not to be thus easily appeased. 'Yes, never mind you, but you have spoil so much my cloth. What you think, I buy this cloth no money? Plenty money you make me lose.' She rocked back and forth and fanned herself vigorously, her cheeks a dark purple. She turned to her guest. 'I have been counting on that dress, Minnie, and now look at it! I wanted to wear it to the garden-party at the consulate, the day after to-morrow. I told him a frill—just look at that silly collar!'

'Yes, I know. It's just what I was saying,' said Mrs. Newman in her tired, peevish voice. 'What I want to know is how will you manage it?'

'Oh, I'll manage it,' replied Mrs. Lowe grimly.

She ignored the tailor for a while and stared out over her trim garden. In the hot sunshine a blue-coated coolie squatted over a border of zinnias, glittering in the

September noon. A narrow, sanded path ran about a square of green lawn. She said nothing, and the tailor stood acutely uncomfortable, the dress still held delicately by the shoulders. A small trickle of perspiration ran down each side of his face. He wet his lips and began in a trembling voice:

'Missy wantchee try?'

'No, I do not,' snapped Mrs. Lowe. 'What for wantchee try? All wrong—collar all wrong—what for try?' She continued to stare out into the shining garden.

'Can makee all same frill,' said the tailor eagerly, persuasively. 'Yes, yes, missy, I makee all same you say. What time you want?'

'I want it to-morrow,' replied the white woman in a loud, hard voice. 'You bring to-morrow twelve o'clock. Suppose you no bring, then I no pay—savee? All time you talkee what time you bring and you never bring.'

'Can do, missy,' said the tailor quietly. He had begun now to fold the dress rapidly and neatly, his thin hands moving with a sure delicacy. 'I know, missy. I bring to-morrow, frill all finish, everything finish, very nice.'

He squatted gracefully, folded the dress into the cloth again and tied it tenderly, careful to crush nothing. Then he rose and stood waiting, upon his face some agony of supplication. His whole soul rose in this silent supplication, so that it was written upon his quiet, high-cheeked face, upon his close-set lips. Sweat broke out upon him afresh. Even Mrs. Lowe could feel dimly that imploring soul. She paused in her rocking and looked up.

'What is it?' she asked sharply. 'What more thing?'

The tailor wet his lips again and spoke in a faint voice, scarcely a whisper. 'Missy, can you give me litty money —one dollar, two dollar?' Before her outraged look his voice dropped yet lower. 'My brother's son he die to-day, I think. He have three piecee baby, one woman —no money buy coffin—no nothing—he very ill to-day——'

Mrs. Lowe looked at her caller. 'Well, of all the nerve!' she breathed, genuinely aghast. Mrs. Newman answered her look.

'It's just what I said,' she replied. 'They are more trouble than they are worth—and the way they *cut*—and then they think about nothing but money!'

Mrs. Lowe turned her rolling grey eyes upon the tailor. He did not look up but he wiped his lips furtively with his sleeve. She stared at him an instant and then her voice came forth filled with righteous anger. 'No,' she said. 'No. You finish dress all proper with frill, I pay you. No finish dress, no pay. Never. You savee, tailor.'

'Yes, missy,' sighed the tailor. All vestige of hope had now disappeared from his face. The atmosphere of supplication died away. A look of cold despair came over his face like a curtain. 'I finish to-morrow twelve o'clock, missy,' he said and turned away.

'See that you do,' shouted Mrs. Lowe triumphantly after him, and she watched his figure with contempt as it disappeared into the hall. Then she turned to her caller. 'If I say to-morrow,' she explained, 'perhaps it will be ready by the day after.' She thought of something and reaching forward in her chair pressed a bell firmly. The servant appeared. 'Boy,' she said, 'look see tailor—see he no takee something.'

Her loud voice penetrated into the house and the

tailor's body, still visible at the end of the hall, straightened itself somewhat and then passed out of sight.

'You never can tell,' said Mrs. Lowe. 'You can't tell whether they are making up these stories or not. If they need money—but they always do need money. I never saw such people. They must make a lot, though, sewing for all these foreigners here in the port. But this tailor is worse than most. He is for ever wanting money before his work is done. Three separate times he has come and said a child was dying or something. I don't believe a word of it. Probably smokes opium or gambles. They all gamble—you can't believe a word they say!'

'Oh, I know——' sighed Mrs. Newman, rising to depart. Mrs. Lowe rose also.

'After all, one simply has to be *firm*,' she said again.

Outside the big white foreign house the tailor went silently and swiftly through the hot street. Well, he had asked her and she would not give him anything. After all his dread and fear of her refusal, all his summoning of courage, she would not give him anything. The dress was more than half done, except for the frill, too. She had given him the silk two days ago, and he had been glad because it would bring him in a few dollars for this nephew of his, who was like his own son, now that the gods had taken away his own little children, three of them. Yes, one by one he had seen his little children die, and he had not one left.

He had therefore clung the more to this only son of his dead younger brother, a young man apprenticed to an ironsmith, and he had three little children now too. Such a strong young man—who could have thought he

would have been seized for death like this? Two months ago it was that the long piece of red-hot iron he was beating into the shape of a ploughshare had slipped somehow from his pincers and had fallen upon his leg and foot and seared the flesh away, almost to the bone. It had fallen on his naked flesh, for it was summer and the little shop was hot, and he had on only his thin cotton trousers rolled to his thighs.

Well, and they had tried every sort of ointment, but what ointment will grow sound flesh again, and what balm is there for such a wound? It was summer, too, when flies are everywhere and how much more do they gather about a festering open sore. The whole leg had swollen, and now on this hot day in the ninth moon the young man lay dying. There were black plasters on his leg from hip to foot, but they were of no avail.

Yes, the tailor had seen that for himself this morning when he went to see his nephew—he had seen death there plainly. The young wife sat weeping in the doorway of the one room that was their home, and the two elder children stared at her gravely, too stricken for play. The third was but a babe she held in her bosom. But this last day or two her milk was scanty and poisoned with her grief, and the child vomited it and wept with inner discomfort.

The tailor turned down an alleyway and into a door in a wall. He passed through a court filled with naked children screaming and quarrelling and shouting at play. Above his head were stretched bamboo poles upon which were hung ragged garments washed in too scanty water and without any soap. Here about these courts a family lived in every room, and poured its waste into the court so that even though it was a dry day and the days had been dry for a moon or more, yet

the court was slimy and running with waste water. A strong, acrid smell of urine filled the air.

But he did not notice this. He passed through three more courts like the first and turned to an open door at the right and went into the dark, windowless room. There was a different odour here. It was the odour of dying, rotten flesh. The sound of a woman's wailing rose from beside the curtained bed, and thither the tailor went, his face not changed from the look it had borne away from the white woman's house. The young wife did not look up at his coming. She sat crouched on the ground beside the bed, and her face was wet with tears. Her long black hair had come uncoiled and stretched over her shoulder and hung to the earth. Over and over she moaned:

'Oh, my husband—oh, my man—I am left alone—Oh, my husband——'

The babe lay on the ground beside her crying feebly now and again. The two elder children sat close to their mother, each of them holding fast to a corner of her coat. They had been weeping too, but now they were silent, their streaked faces upturned to look at their uncle.

But the tailor paid no heed to them now. He looked into the hempen curtains of the bed and said gently:

'Are you still living, my son?'

The dying man turned his eyes with difficulty. He was horribly swollen, his hands, his naked upper body, his neck, his face. But these were nothing to the immense, log-like swelling of his burned leg. It lay there so huge it seemed he was attached to it, rather than it to him. His glazed eyes fixed themselves upon his uncle. He opened his puffed lips and after a long

time and a mighty effort of concentration his voice came forth in a hoarse whisper:

'These children——'

The tailor's face was suddenly convulsed with suffering. He sat down upon the edge of the bed and began to speak earnestly:

'You need not grieve for your children, my son. Die peacefully. Your wife and your children shall come to my house. They shall take the place of my own three. Your wife shall be daughter to me and to my wife, and your children shall be our grandchildren. Are you not my own brother's son? And he dead, too, and only I left now!'

He began to weep quietly, and it could be seen that the lines upon his face were set there by other hours of this repressed, silent weeping, for as he wept his face hardly changed at all, only the tears rolled down his cheeks.

After a long time the dying man's voice came again with the same rending effort, as though he tore himself out of some heavy stupor to say what must be said:

'You—are poor—too——'

But the uncle answered quickly, bending towards the dying man, for the swollen eyes were now closed and he could not be sure he was heard:

'You're not to worry. Rest your heart. I have work—these white women are always wanting new dresses. I have a silk dress now nearly finished for the postmaster's wife—nearly done, except for a frill, and then she will give me money for it, and perhaps more sewing. We shall do very well——'

But the young man made no further reply. He had gone into that stupor for ever, and he could rouse himself no more.

Nevertheless, he still breathed slightly throughout that long, hot day. The tailor rose once to place his bundle in a corner, and to remove his robe, and then he took his place again beside the dying man and remained immovable through the hours. The woman wailed on and on, but at last she was exhausted and sat leaning against the end of the bed, her eyes closed, sobbing now and again softly. But the children grew used to it. They grew used even to their father's dying, and they ran out into the court to play. Once or twice a kindly neighbour woman came and put her head in at the door, and the last time she picked up the babe and carried him away, holding him to her own full breast to comfort him. Outside her voice could be heard shouting in cheerful pity:

'Well, his hour is come, and he is foul already as though he had been dead a month!'

So the hot day drew on at last to its end, and when twilight came the young man ceased breathing and was dead.

Only then did the tailor rise. He rose and put on his gown and took his bundle and he said to the crouching woman:

'He is dead. Have you any money at all?'

Then the young woman rose also and looked at him anxiously, smoothing the hair back from her face. It could now be seen that she was still very young, not more than twenty years of age, a young, common creature such as may be seen anywhere in any street on any day, neither pretty nor ugly, slight, and somewhat slovenly even on ordinary occasions and now unwashed for many days. Her grimy face was round, the mouth full and projecting, the eyes a little stupid. It was clear that she had lived from day to day, never foreseeing the

catastrophe that had now befallen her. She looked at the tailor humbly and anxiously.

'We have nothing left,' she said. 'I pawned his clothes and my winter clothes and the table and stools and we have only that bed on which he lies.'

The look of despair deepened on the man's face. 'Is there any one of whom you might borrow?' he asked.

She shook her head. 'I do not know any one except these people in the court. And what have they?' Then as the full terror of her position came upon her she cried out shrilly: 'Uncle, we have no one but you in the world!'

'I know,' he said simply. He looked once more at the bed. 'Cover him,' he said in a low voice. 'Cover him against the flies.'

He passed through the courts quickly then, and the neighbour woman, who was still holding the babe, bawled at him as he went, 'Is he dead yet?'

'He is dead,' said the tailor, and went through the gate into the street and turned to the west, where his own home was.

It seemed to him that this was the most hot day of that whole summer. So is the ninth moon hot, sometimes, and so does summer often pass burning fiercely into autumn. The evening had brought no coolness and thunderous clouds towered over the city. The streets were filled with half-naked men and with women in thinnest garb, sitting upon little low bamboo couches they had moved out of their houses. Some lay flat upon the street on mats of reed or strips of woven matting. Children wailed everywhere and mothers fanned their babes wearily, dreading the night.

Through this crowd the tailor passed swiftly, his head

bent down. He was now very weary, but still not hungry, although he had fasted the whole day. He could not eat—no, not even when he reached the one room in a court which was his home, and he could not eat even when his poor stupid old wife, who could not keep her babies alive, came shuffling and panting out of the street and placed a bowl of cold rice gruel on the table for him to eat. There was that smell about his clothes—it filled his nostrils still. He thought suddenly of the silk dress. Suppose the white woman noticed the odour there! He rose suddenly and opened the bundle and shook out the dress, and turning it carefully inside out he hung it to air upon a decrepit dressmaker's form that stood by the bed.

But it could not hang there long. He must finish it and have the money. He took off his robe and his undershirt and his shoes and stockings and sat in his trousers. He must be careful in his heat that his sweat did not stain the dress. He found a grey towel and wrapped it about his head to catch the drops of sweat, and put a rag upon the table on which to wipe his hands from time to time.

While he sewed swiftly, holding the silk very delicately in his thin fingers, not daring to hasten beyond what he was able to do well, either, lest she be not pleased, he pondered on what he could do. He had had an apprentice last year, but the times were so evil he had let the lad go, and so had now but his own ten fingers to use. But that was not altogether ill, either, because the lad had made so many mistakes and the white woman said so insistently, 'You must makee yourself, tailor—no give small boy makee spoil.' Yes, but with just these ten fingers of his could he hope to make another dress in three days? Suppose she had another silk dress—that

would be ten dollars for the two. He could buy a coffin for ten dollars down and the promise of more later.

But supposing she had no more work to give him now —then what could he do? What indeed, but go to a usurer. And yet that he did not dare to do. A man was lost if he went to a usurer, for the interest ran faster than a tiger upon him, double and triple in a few months what he had borrowed. Then when the coffin was buried he must bring the young wife and the three babies here. There was only this one room for them all, too. His heart warmed somewhat at the thought of the babies, and then stopped in terror at the thought that he must feed them.

He must find more work to do. Yes, there would be more work, doubtless. Surely the postmaster's wife would have more, another silk dress to-morrow for him, doubtless. She was so rich, living there in that big foreign house, set in a flower-garden.

Midnight drew on and he was not finished. The worst of all was yet to be made—the frill. He fetched his fashion-book and pored over it beneath the flickering light of the small tin kerosene lamp. So the frill went; here it turned, a long, wide frill, closely pleated. He folded the small pleats, his hands trembling with fatigue. His wife lay snoring in the bed now. Nothing would wake her, not even the rackety, noisy sewing-machine with which he set fast the carefully basted frill. At dawn there remained but the edge to whip by hand and the irons to heat on the charcoal brazier. Well, he would sleep a little and rest his aching eyes, and then get up to finish it. He hung the dress upon the form, and then he lay down beside his wife and fell instantly into deep sleep.

But not for long could he sleep. At seven he rose and went to his work again and worked until nearly noon, stopping only for a mouthful of the food he could not eat the night before. Then he was finished. It had taken him longer than he hoped it would. He squinted up at the sun. Yes, he could just get to the house by noon. He must hasten. He must not make her angry so that she would perhaps refuse him the other dress because for the moment she was angry. No, somehow he must have the other dress. Then if he sewed this afternoon and to-night he could finish it in another day. He smelled the finished dress anxiously. A little odour, perhaps—would she notice it ?

But fortunately she did not notice it. She was sitting in that strange, moving chair she had on the veranda, and she looked at the dress critically.

'All finish ?' she asked in her loud, sudden way.

'Yes, missy,' he answered humbly.

'All right, I go try.'

She had gone into her room then, and he held his breath, waiting. Perhaps there was some odour to it yet ? But she came back wearing the dress, a satisfied look upon her face ; but not too satisfied.

'How much ?' she said abruptly.

He hesitated. 'Five dollar, missy, please.' Then seeing her angry eyes he added hastily, 'Silk dress, five dollar, please, missy. Any tailor five dollars.'

'Too much—too much,' she declared. 'You spoil my cloth, too !' But she paid the money to him grudgingly, and he took it from her, delicately careful not to touch her hand.

'Thank you, missy,' he said gently.

He dropped to his heels, and began to tie up his bundle, his fingers trembling. He must ask her now.

But how could he ? What would he do if she refused ? He gathered his courage together desperately.

'Missy,' he said, looking up humbly, but avoiding her eyes, 'you have more dress I can do ?'

He waited, hanging on her answer, staring into the shining garden. But she had already turned to go into the house again to take off the dress. She called back at him carelessly :

'No—no more ! You makee too muchee trouble. You spoil my cloth—plenty more tailor more cheap and not so muchee trouble !'

The next day at the garden-party she met little Mrs. Newman, sitting lanquidly in a wicker chair, watching white figures move about the lawn intent upon a game of croquet. Mrs. Newman's faded blue eyes brightened somewhat at the sight of the new dress.

'You really did get your dress after all,' she said with faint interest. 'I didn't think you really would. He did that frill nicely, didn't he ?'

Mrs. Lowe looked down upon her large bosom. There the frill lay, beautifully pleated, perfectly ironed. She said with satisfaction, 'Yes, it is nice, isn't it ? I am glad I decided to have the frill, after all. And so cheap ! My dear, with all this frill the dress cost only five dollars to be made—that's less than two dollars at home ! What's that ? Oh, yes, he brought it punctually at twelve, as I told him he must. It's as I said—you simply have to be firm with these native tailors !'

THE QUARREL

THE man stared angrily about the crowd in the little street of the hamlet where his home was. There his neighbours stood about him and about his wife, a circle of some thirty or forty people, men and women, their faces grave and listening. Little children, naked in the summer heat, squeezed themselves restlessly through the legs of their elders in order that they might reach the empty spot in the centre where the man and his wife stood, and so miss nothing of the quarrel. The man would not look at his weeping wife, and he hung his head sullenly and so saw these children, and seeing, saw one of his own among them, a child of eight or nine years. Yes, and there were his two younger ones, come also to see what was happening, and the three stared up at their parents in astonishment.

Suddenly the man could not bear it. There had been enough else, his wife's tears and scolding all these days, her hidden angers and suspicions which she would not speak. The man gave a great bellow and darted at his third son and cuffed him and roared at him:

'Get you home, you little dog!'

The child burst into loud wails and rubbed his shaven head and stood wailing, sure of sympathy from the crowd. The woman cried out then in the midst of her subdued weeping, turning her tear-wet face to this one and to that one among the crowd:

'You see how he is, neighbours—this is how he is nowadays!'

The crowd stared unblinkingly at the man and in perfect silence. They had listened to everything: to the

woman's accusation, to the man's short answers, to the silences. But disapproval of him was now thick in the air, and the man felt it. He looked down at his bare horny feet, and began to scuff his toe back and forth slowly in the dust. The dust made him think of his dry fields, waiting for his watering. He muttered :

'There is all my work waiting for me and here am I wasting the good afternoon! '

This thought simmered in him awhile and suddenly his round dark face turned crimson and the veins stood out black on his temples. He lifted his head quickly and threw one furious look at his wife and he shouted at her :

'What is it you want, you bitch ? Tell me and let me get back to the fields ! How can I get money to feed you and all your—your——'

'You see how he is," the woman wailed. 'You see how he speaks to me now ! Two months ago he was the best and kindest man. Sisters, you have often heard me say how I was blessed by the gods in the man to whom I am given. Always has he put into my hand every penny he earned, and he would come like a child and ask me for a bit to shave his head with before a feast day or to game a little with, or to buy some tobacco. And I was glad to give him pleasure. Now these two months I have not had a penny from him, no, not although he sold the rice, the last rice we had, and sold it well, and he has not even told me what he gained for it ! '

She fell to louder weeping, her small brown wrinkled face streaming with tears, and then she took up her blue apron and flung it over her head and wept aloud.

Still the crowd was silent and the children stared avidly. The man's two younger children crept up to

their mother, and hiding their faces in her baggy blue cotton trousers began to weep convulsively. In this silence and weeping the man looked up cornerwise and as though unwillingly at a certain door in the street.

Yes, there was some one standing there, a young girl in a long green robe, such as young women in towns wore these days, and her hair was cut short about her neck. She had a sharp mischievous pretty face and she was smiling a little as she listened to the quarrel, leaning against the door frame with an indolent grace. Now when she caught the man's stolen look she took a rounded comb out of her shining black hair and passed it quickly through her bangs, cut long to her clearly marked eyebrows.

But the man was looking down again. His face had grown paler and he said in a smothered voice:

'I do not know why you want money all the time. There is rice in the house, and there is flour, and there is bean oil, and we have cabbages in the garden.'

The woman pulled the patched apron abruptly from her face and leaned towards him, her eyes dried with sudden anger. She put her little, hard, wrinkled hands on her narrow hips and leaned her thin, hard, little body from the waist, and shouted at him shrilly:

'Yes, and is bare food clothing too? Are not the shoes gone from the children's feet? Look at me, neighbours—look at these patches on my coat. When have I ever had any new clothes? Three years ago he got the gains from that money club he belongs to—ten silver pieces he gained in his turn, and he bought two bolts of coarse white cloth of the strongest, cheapest sort, and I dyed it dark blue with these hands of mine, and I cut him two suits and me one suit and the eldest boy a suit, and we wear them still and I have patched

and patched. Now I can patch no more—must I not have cloth even for patches? I have not shoes for my feet, and with my feet bound how can I go barefoot as the children do? Only this morning I asked him again for a little money to buy stuff for shoes, and what does he do? He cursed me and gave me naught, and he was even so angry he would not come home this noon, but went and bought some bread at the inn and all the good food going to waste that I had made for him! And he said he had no money, but he could go and buy bread to feed his anger against me——' Her anger broke into tears suddenly again. 'It is not as if I asked him for money to buy a long robe such as some women wear these days. Oh, well I know he would have money to buy a long robe for some woman but not for his wife!'

At this a terrible look came over the man's face. He leaped forward, his arm raised to strike the woman, but out of the crowd several stepped and caught his arm, and the women pulled his wife back. One of the men who held him said to him gently:

'Remember she is your wife and the mother of your children.'

'I have borne him sons—I have borne him sons,' wailed the wife in a low voice of agony.

At this moment a gentle voice was heard. It came from an old woman with a quiet wrinkled face, who had stood all this time on the edge of the crowd, a little apart from the others, and leaning upon her staff. Now she called out with concern:

'You two, you are no longer young. Li the First, you are forty and five years old. I know, for I was with your mother when you were born. Your wife is forty and four. I know for I was at the wedding and helped

her from the bridal chair at your father's door. You have been married twenty-eight years, and you have had twelve children, and there are seven of them left. Your eldest son would have been twenty and seven years old, had he lived, and you would have now been a grandfather and your wife a grandmother. Your youngest child here is but three years old. Think of all these things and of all the years you have lived together upon your land and let there be peace between you now.'

This the old woman spoke in a quavering, clear, old voice, and because she was the oldest woman in the hamlet and mother to the richest man, everybody respected her and listened to her while she spoke. When she had finished the man's wife was softened and she turned to the old woman and said with earnestness:

'Grandmother, you know I have always said my man was good—the best and kindest man. So was he ever until two months ago. Now see how he looks!' She turned her eyes on the man and all the eyes of the crowd turned to him also. The man's head drooped again and a slow dark crimson came creeping up out of his neck. 'See how he looks, Grandmother! Ever the gentlest good man he was, and now always angry and sour! Yes, he can go out and smile and laugh and be merry before some, but when he comes home he is dark and silent and there is not a merry word in him, and he never speaks except to blame me because my hair is not smooth or my coat not clean or some such thing wrong. And I have but this one coat to my body, and how can I be always clean? I have the house and the children and the work in the fields, and how can I sit as some women do and put powder on my skin to make it pale, and oil on my hair to make it smooth?'

Suddenly the man could not bear it again. He shook himself restlessly, his strongly-knit body straightening itself.

'I ask you, what is it you want of me?' he muttered thickly. 'All this noise and talk over nothing—what do you want of me?'

'What do I want of you?' repeated the woman passionately. 'I want this one thing. I want you to be to me as you have ever been, until two months ago. That is all I ask. Your heart is changed—your heart is turned away from me! I ask but this one thing—be to me as you were!'

It was now as though the crowd were not there. There were but the two, the man and the woman, solitary in a world beating with passion, the passion of the woman. She stretched out her little horny hands to him, hands swollen at the knuckles, the nails hard and black and split. 'Oh, be to me as you were—be to me as you were!' she moaned.

A sigh went up from the crowd. The man wetted his lips two or three times, quickly, and out from the edge of his stubbly black hair two small streams of perspiration began to trickle towards his jaws. He glanced again, secretly and unwillingly, at the door where the slender, pale-green figure leaned in the afternoon sunshine. The girl's robe was such a green as are young leaves newly full on fruit-trees in spring, pale, but very pure and green. He would not look so high as her face. But he knew perfectly how her face was, her pale skin, the full red lips always smiling, her eyes black and fearless, never downcast or turned away from him. It was that look of hers that caught him whenever he passed by—he passed by often just for that look, although he never spoke one word to her. How could he speak since

she was the granddaughter of the richest man in the hamlet and he but a farmer who did not even own his land but must have all he had from off the bit he rented? He had been saving these two months even for a long blue cotton gown such as most men have as a matter of course, and for a pair of white town-made stockings and a pair of town-made shoes.

When he thought of this bitter saving he set his heart against that wailing wife of his. Well, he had been faithful all these years. He was forty and five years old and he had never taken a bit of pleasure for himself—no, not once had he gone into a common pleasure-house where even a poor man may go and for a little piece of silver take some joy and change. Day in and day out he had laboured for his wife and for his children until now he was forty and five years old, and he had but one old robe to his body, and never anything else but these old patched clothes for his labour.

Yet there was this one thing that troubled him. Did she look at all men like that, with her eyes so wide open and lingering, or was it only at him? This was what had kept him uneasy all these days and nights. How could he know if she only looked at him like this? Every time he passed the door he stole his glance at her and every time she gave him back the look, so free, so bold. He had heard men talking together sometimes as men will, and he had heard them say that nowadays women were changed, fearless of any man they were, taking any one they chose, free and enticing in all they did.

He wetted his lips again and felt the perspiration down his neck. How could he know if she looked at all men so, or was the look saved only for him? Somehow he must know the truth.

'Oh, be to me as you were!' his wife whispered brokenly, and she lifted the corner of her apron to her eyes and wiped them, her anger gone from her utterly, and only agony left.

He lifted his head suddenly and looked full at the doorway. Must he not know the truth?

The whole crowd looked with him. When they saw his head lift and his eyes turn thither, they lifted their heads and looked. There the girl stood in the doorway, preening herself. She had the little white comb of bone in her hand, and her fair arm was upraised, and she smoothed back the glistening black hair from her little pale ears, where gold rings hung. The women stared at her with hostility. 'That long robe like a man's——' some woman muttered suddenly. But every man looked at her in silence and in secret wonder.

Now the old lady at the edge of the crowd when she saw them all looking, she looked, too, and with astonishment. This girl to her was but her great-granddaughter and a naughty child whose town parents had spoiled her. Has she not said a score of times to her son how the child had been spoiled until she was fit for no man to wed, and that she pitied the man to whom she was betrothed? But now she stared with increasing sharpness at this girl. For the first time she saw the pretty pettish face, lit with secret wantonness and mischief, turned to some one in the crowd. The dry red came up into the old lady's wrinkled cheeks. She thumped her way to the door, her stick knocking on the cobble-stones, and stared in the direction of the girl's gaze. That gaze fell straight as any beam upon a young man who hung about the door. At first he had been in the crowd listening to the quarrel, but now he had turned his back upon it and was staring at the girl, his sheepish eyes

half-shamed, too, his jaw hanging, a little water at the corner of his mouth.

The old lady thumped her stick hard upon the stones. She knew that lad, son to the innkeeper who owned no land and was but a sort of public servant.

'Get you into the house, you shameless, wicked child!' she cried suddenly, her voice very shrill and cracked, but full of such anger and authority that the girl, pouting a little, turned half away. 'Into the house, I say!' the old lady cried again, lifting her staff so menacingly that the girl slipped within the shadow of the door.

But her little hand was still on the lintel, a little slender pale hand, with a gold ring on the tiny last finger. The old lady went up and struck this hand sharply and it was withdrawn into the shadow also.

'Never have I seen such a maid as this,' the old lady shouted, still shrill. 'Standing at the door, a betrothed maid, and staring at any man who passes! So they tell me all maids do nowadays, and what the world is coming to I swear I do not know!'

In the crowd the passion died away softly. The wife smiled a little, somehow comforted, the women were less sullen, and the men looked obliquely here and there and cast their eyes at sky or field, or spat in the street's dust. A child cried and the crowd moved apart and made ready to scatter, its interest gone. Only the innkeeper's son stood still bemused, staring at the empty door.

But he was not the only one to have seen that beam-like look. The man had seen it and his wife also. Out of the man's face had ebbed every drop of blood, leaving him yellow as a sere leaf. He stood looking down into the dust. Now he knew.

But the old lady was not finished. She understood

everything suddenly and she was not finished. She turned and shook her stick slightly at the man and pointed it at him.

'Li the First,' she said firmly, 'you are a fool. Go back to your fields. But first give your wife that money you have in your girdle.'

Slowly the man fumbled in his belt and brought forth four pieces of silver. He did not turn his head but he held the silver in his outstretched hand. Then his wife put forth her hand until he felt beneath his finger-tips the hard dry palm of his wife's hand. He dropped the money there and with it all his dreams.

Then he straightened himself quickly and looked about the parting crowd, his face a little bleak, but serene again, and he spoke in his rough and usual voice:

'I do not know why my woman has made all this quarrel,' he said. 'All she needed to do was to tell me for what she wanted the money. As she says herself, I have ever given to her all I had.'

He stooped and picked up again the hoe he had thrown upon the ground when he was called there, and shouldering it he went, without once turning back his head, to his own life once more.

REPATRIATED

YOU—you— What are you——' Mathilde ground the words through her teeth. She had opened the door of the bedroom an inch or two, and she stared into the main room of the little apartment where she and Cheng had lived during the three years since they came from France to this city on the coast of China.

There he sat—Cheng, her husband—his black hair glistening under the strong uncovered electric light that hung above the table, his immaculate, slender shape sharply defined in the dark blue Western garments he wore, his hands moving pale and swift among the bamboo gaming-pieces. Beside him sat his younger brother who was a student at the Government University and so must live with them. He was a gawky adolescent whom Mathilde despised. Now she despised him more than ever as he sat slouched in his wrinkled silk robe. Whatever he wore seemed wrinkled almost before he put it on—he was like that—and a long black oily lock of hair was for ever falling into his eyes. And there were those other two, those men who lived upstairs in that apartment—those two who seemed never to have any work to do—what were they, those two? They had sat here gambling, these four men! She had lain in the bed waiting for her husband, tossing on the wide brass bed around which Cheng would have heavy curtains hung in the Chinese fashion. She had lain awake, growing more furious every hour, listening to the gaming; until this moment when the clacking of the pieces shuffled together broke out afresh.

A moment ago the noise had stopped and she held

herself taut in the silence. Let him come now—and she would not say anything before the others! No, she would be just, she would be calm—for once as calm as he would be. Let him come and she would wait until he had placed himself beside her. Heaven! If she spoke to her own husband when they were alone in the night, who could blame her? Had she not heard her own *maman* speak so to her papa in the night also? And Papa as good a man as ever drew breath in Lyons, or even in the whole of France, who never looked at gaming and whose only freedom was a little wine-drinking with his comrades!

No, she would begin mildly but firmly, reasonably, as good wives do when they upbraid their husbands a little for a fault. She would say as she had said before, only now she would not be angry:

'Cheng, I have borne this gaming long enough. You see, it is thus: you game all night and when morning comes you will not be fit to go to your office. Then what must be the result? You will lose your position—and what shall we eat then?'

And then he would doubtless answer, as he always did, in his quiet way, 'But no one comes to the office at the hour. Why should I be first? Besides my chief is my father's friend, and he would not break friendship with my father and dismiss me. Besides also you seem never able to understand, my Mathilde, that to game is not to sin, and I cannot refuse my friends, especially when they come to my own house to amuse me. One cannot refuse friends—not in a civilized country, Mathilde. Moreover, when I game, I do not lose—more often I win.'

All this he would say in his careful student French, not looking at her but at his hands while he spoke—his

beautiful hands that were the colour of pale amber. He spoke French very well. He had, indeed, been a student in Lyons when first they met and fell in love, and he had come to her papa's *pâtisserie* to buy the little cakes he ate with his wine. He spoke French so well, indeed, that she had not troubled herself to learn Chinese. In fact, she despised Chinese. When she heard the Chinese speaking together she would hug her arms about herself and say scornfully, sometimes even aloud, if she felt inclined—she was afraid of no one, not of these Chinese, above all—yes, she would say :

'What a language it is ! The devil himself would not speak it !'

So she had listened, taut upon her bed, her blonde head thrown back, her grey eyes staring into the red-flowered curtains, her short, blunt hands clenched in the soft stuff of her kimono. There was a burst of laughter. She heard her husband's low, smooth voice. There was laughter again. What had he said ? This was the only reason she wished she knew Chinese, that she might understand these low speeches of his which were always followed with such laughter. When she asked him afterwards what he said, he answered in the smooth half-careless way he had when he spoke to her :

'You would not understand, my Mathilde—a pun—you would need to have studied our literature before you could understand.'

'But I am not a fool, Cheng !' she would cry. 'I can understand if you will tell me. You never trouble yourself to explain anything to me.'

He smiled then ; he smiled very often at her. If the mood were on him he would take her hand and pull her to him and whisper, coaxing her, 'Pretty little foreigner—pretty little white thing——'

Were they beginning again? Again his voice, again the laughter, again the clack of the gaming-pieces. She had leaped from her bed, her silk kimono stretched about her small plump body, her short hair tousled. She had thrust her little white face into the crack of the door and sent the hiss through at them.

But the gaming did not stop. Her husband, glanced up and smiled, and shrugged slightly his slender, sharply defined shoulders. The sallow young brother bent his head lower, as though to see the game. The other two men did not look, they made no sign, but her shrewd eyes saw a change in their faces. Ah, well, then they might see if she cared what they thought of her, or if they pitied her husband! They might see if she were afraid of them at all! No, she was not afraid, although she was the only white woman in this house or in this street or even in this whole quarter of the Chinese city! These Chinese, these—these *canaille*—even though she were afraid, she would never show it—show she was afraid, and she was lost among them! No, she had her temper and she had her good sharp tongue, and she could make them understand well enough, though she could not speak their devil's tongue! No, and she did not care how loudly she let her voice come out, even though Cheng hated her to shout; he always said, shrinking a little from the noise, 'Only vulgar women shout.' Yet one must keep them afraid—it was the only way for her to be safe!

'Bah!' she cried loudly, and darted suddenly into the room. Now she faced them, screaming at them, her hair falling into her eyes, trembling as she clutched her kimono to her little full bosom. Her words poured from her, streaming out in the slight patois of her class, 'Ah-ha, you Chinese—you think I am afraid? Is this my house,

I ask you? Yes, I tell you it is my house! It is my house, and I will not have you in it, you Chinese dogs! Out—out! Shall I lie awake night after night because you wish to gamble here upon my table? Gamble, but not in my house! I forbid it! Never, I say, never once more!'

She darted at them again and with her sturdy outspread hands she swept the table clean. The bamboo pieces clattered to the floor. The men sat motionless, but her husband cried in a low, shamed voice, 'Mathilde!'

She did not heed him. Her kimono flew wide now from her thin nightgown, but she cared for nothing. She kicked the pieces upon the floor with her bare feet.

'Have a care, Mathilde!' said her husband. But he did not rise or look at her. He sat with his hands locked together tightly upon the table, and he looked at his hands. The young brother pushed back the hair restlessly from his forehead and ran his tongue over his full pale lips. There was nothing but silence. That silence she could not bear. She snapped her fingers loudly and cried again:

'Ha—you think I am afraid—I, a Frenchwoman?'

She seized the porcelain teapot in both hands and crashed it to the floor, and after it the tea-bowls, one by one. Then she stood panting, staring from one still, yellow face to the other. At last she let her eyes rest upon her husband. But he did not look at her; he sat staring at his hands that were tightly locked together upon the table before him. His face was graven and his thin lips were pressed tightly together.

Now the two guests rose suddenly, murmuring a few words to their host. The woman they ignored as though she had been a petulant child. Delicately they stepped

over the stream of tea upon the floor, careful lest they soil their black velvet shoes, and the edges of their dark satin robes. They went to the door, and their host rose quickly and followed them. He smiled a little piteously, his face strained, his eyes seeking their comprehension. It was as though he besought them, as though he said, 'Women are so at best ; and foreign women——'

Even Mathilde, watching him, perceived that if he spoke he would have spoken thus. Perhaps if she had not been there he would have spoken thus. Her anger burned in her, hot and sore.

But suddenly she forgot him, for as he opened the door she saw figures standing there—it was that woman from the next apartment, that woman from Shanghai. She was always there when the door opened, it seemed, but she would never come in unless Cheng were at home. Yes, and the two talked together, Cheng and this woman, and Mathilde could not understand and he would never tell her what they said. If she asked—and she always asked—he answered :

'Nothing—it was nothing ; it is not worth telling again.'

There the woman stood now, her sleek black head shining under the bright bare hall light, her smooth long face painted as carefully as though—— Yes, without doubt she was a wicked woman ! There was a young man with her now as she stood wrapped in her long black velvet cape, a young man pale-skinned and long-haired, and the two of them stared into the room at the broken teapot and the broken bowls, and they smiled a little, and the woman murmured a question, her painted brows uplifted.

Mathilde watched her husband. He shrugged delicately, one eyebrow moved, and he began to answer, his

lips twisted in a bitter smile. But this Mathilde could not bear. At this moment she could not bear these two to speak together in the language she had never learned. She flew forward and crashed the door shut between them and she turned to face her husband.

She was not afraid of him, she told herself, and she stood panting a little, looking at him. She was not afraid of him, and yet she always watched to see what he would do when she let her temper out as she had done to-night. It seemed to her now that he must punish her somehow.

But he ignored her again. He turned, without meeting her eyes and stooping in his quick and graceful way he began to pick up the pieces of broken china, holding them firmly as he piled them and yet seeming scarcely to touch them. Then he opened a window and dropped them into the darkness. She could hear the faint crash as they fell on the heap of broken brick left from building the house and which had never been cleared away.

Then he turned to his younger brother, who had risen and stood hesitatingly by the table. 'Fetch me a towel,' he said, very quietly.

The young man returned with a grey towel. Cheng took it, and in silence he stooped to mop the spilled tea.

'Let me, brother,' said the youth suddenly and with sympathy, his voice almost a whisper.

Mathilde watched them with sullen interest, her back still against the door. Let them, then, let them wipe it away and suffer a little too. But she had scarcely made the thought when she seized the cloth away from the brother-in-law's hands. No, she would not have Cheng's brother sorry for him!

'Go to bed!' she said harshly. Her husband said something in a low tone to the youth. She did not

understand him. Well, then, and what did she care if she could not understand? She wiped the floor savagely and when it was clean she began to pick up the bamboo pieces, fitting them into the polished wooden box with trembling hands. The room was very quiet. She looked up suddenly. She was alone. The brother-in-law was gone. Through the open door she could see her husband preparing himself for bed. He had taken off his coat and collar and she saw his slender, erect back, the smooth nape of his neck where the black shining hair met the golden skin. A faint stir rose in her heart; the tears rushed into her eyes, tears half of dying anger and half of a strange shame. Why should she be ashamed? She would not be ashamed. She had borne more than any woman could bear. She must bear no more; she must keep them afraid. She had not a friend—nowhere a friend. The tears began to run down her cheeks. But she wiped them away with energy upon the sleeve of her kimono and she closed the box and set it upon the narrow mantelpiece.

When she parted the curtains of the bed he was asleep. But she could never tell if he really slept. He could seem to be asleep when he was not, his slender body relaxed, his breathing even. She saw him lying so now upon the hard Chinese pillow beside her soft one. His breath came and went, sighing through his slightly parted lips. The light fell upon his smooth oval face, still and pure and waxen. He looked very young. Though he was five years older than she, he looked younger. Her body was more square than his, her face more ruggedly shaped. She knew this, and looking down upon his calm face she told herself she did not love him any more.

And now this very calmness infuriated her. She

could not bear his eternal calmness. She had never broken through it, never. No weeping, no temper, no power that she had could break through it. Even when his mood was on him, when for a time he loved her, even passion could not break through this calmness. She shook his shoulder violently. He woke as though from a dream, saw her, smiled a little, and closed his eyes again.

'You shall not sleep!' she whispered intensely, shaking him again. 'All these hours you have made me stay awake—and you shall not sleep either, until we come to an understanding! You hear me, Cheng? I say we shall understand each other!'

He woke then, so completely that she was sure he had not slept at all. He had been deceiving her—and her heart grew more hard. Yet he always waked like this, suddenly and completely.

'Can we ever understand each other?' he asked gravely, his eyes narrow and shining black between their lids.

'What do you mean?' she asked quickly.

'I mean,' he answered slowly, 'I mean only that men and women can never understand each other—never, except when they draw near at the moment of passion, and how short a moment it must be!'

He glanced at her and suddenly he sighed and rubbed his hand over his face, his slight hand that always shamed her somehow because it was narrower and more feminine than her own. She struggled with her direct *bourgeoise* mind to understand what he meant. Now why did he look at her so and why did he sigh? Whenever he spoke in that smooth learned way she did not know what he meant. If he would only be angry with her sometimes—simple and angry as men ought to be

with their wives—if the temper would fly out of him honest and hot and frank, if he would sometimes even beat her, she could understand him. Men in her street in Lyons did sometimes beat their wives. Her own father had often threatened it. If she had married that big Pierre who worked in her father's *pâtisserie* he would have beaten her, she very well knew, if she had thrown the dishes on the floor and broken them in a temper. Yes, he would have put out his great arm and seized her and held her fast and slapped her well, if she had shamed him so before his friends. That would have been to be married to a man, then!

But this—this one—he was never angry like a man. He only spoke gently, half-smiling, or he sighed like this and turned away; and she could not understand him, though the words seemed plain enough. If she grew angry at last, he bore it as though her tempers might be some illness she could not help and which had nothing to do with him.

'You are vile!' she cried loudly. 'All you Chinese are vile! You think women are for nothing but your—your—for when you need them. You never think of me, never, when the moment is gone!'

He smiled bitterly without looking at her and lifted his eyebrows.

'How well you understand me, after all!' he murmured.

She paused again, baffled. What did he mean now? Ah, just how could she hurt him?

She sat down on the bed and pushed back her rough hair.

'You have deceived me,' she said heavily, staring down at him. 'In Lyons you told me many lies. I asked you, "What is your China like?" You told me,

like France, but better and more beautiful. Yes, you said this the night I ran secretly out of my papa's house to meet you, and we sat in the park behind a tree. I was only eighteen and I believed you! We sat in that beautiful park, and we looked at the streets through the plane-trees, and the comfortable kind people came and went. And you said, "My country is like France, but more beautiful and the people are more kind. There is everything in my country. There are pagodas and there are great handsome buildings. You will lack nothing. You need never do any work again. There are servants to do everything for you. I can give you what that Pierre will never be able to give you, all his life long, working in that little shop of your father's. In my house you shall be a great lady, living as you please. You shall have everything!" Yes, Cheng, you told me this, "I will give you everything!" But'—she thrust out her hands and shrugged herself violently—'I ask you, Cheng, where is this *everything*? There is nothing here—nothing, nothing! These small filthy streets—the beggars—these filthy crowds who screech at me and laugh and call me "foreign devil"—yes, and I have been spat upon. *I!* And I cannot buy myself a hat or a little dress or shoes—there are no shops that can be called shops; there is not a theatre, for I will not call that shrieking place where you go a theatre—I do not know what that place is. And that one old pagoda—crumbling to pieces, and what is there beautiful in it? And look at my house! I am ashamed to write *maman* that for a house I have four little cupboards, and for a kitchen a little stinking smoky hole! You said I should have servants, many servants. Where are they? I ask you, do you think this is a servant, this old fool of a countrywoman who will not learn of me, who does not

yet know how a ragout is made, and who will not even listen to what I say without looking at you to see if it is to be done? No, I know you will say again that she does not understand me, but she does very well understand, if she likes! You have lied to me, you have lied to me!'

She burst into noisy weeping. 'You never told me that I must have that dirty brother of yours here; no, nor that so much of your wage must go to your father and to your old uncle—but I spit at that uncle of yours! If he comes again as he did once and seeks to live here in my house and smoke his vile opium pipe, I will throw him out of the window with my own hands! I can do it! I am not afraid of any of you! I despise you all—I am a Frenchwoman!'

'That is where you are mistaken,' said her husband suddenly. He sat up in bed and looked at her now with earnestness. 'It is because you are for ever saying to yourself, Mathilde, that you are a Frenchwoman that you are unhappy. The truth is you are Chinese now: you are Chinese because your husband is Chinese, and you can only be happy if you will forget you have been French——'

'No—no—no!' she shrieked, shaking her head.

'You must, indeed,' he said with fresh gravity. 'As for deceiving you, remember you have never been willing to go and see what my home is. It *is* beautiful. My father was once a wealthy mandarin. We are poorer than we once were, as who is not in these times? It is right for me to send him money now, and to help my younger brother. But our city is set in the hills of Hunan, and in our home there are a hundred courts. Our house is older and more beautiful than anything in Lyons. Do you think it can compare with that poor

house of your father's, or with the working man's house that must have been yours if you had married that Pierre you will not forget ?'

He leaned forward in his earnestness, and when she drew back from him, shaking her head, he cried out more passionately than she had ever heard him.

'Ah, I know you do not forget him! But do you think I do not know I have married beneath me? I know it very well, I knew it even when for a while I was a fool over your fair skin. You are the daughter of a little shopkeeper; I am the son of a viceroy. Your father reads the newspaper and is content. My father is a poet and a scholar. If you were willing, you could go to my home and see such beauty as you have never seen. But you will not go. You are determined to stay here in this coast city, in this hideous foreign house. You will have everything as you have been accustomed; you even try to make me into a Frenchman—you keep me in the garments of your people, you make me speak your tongue, lest haply you perceive that you are married to what I am proud to be—a Chinese!'

She listened against her will, frightened, for she had never seen him like this. She had broken through the calmness she had hated, and now she was dismayed. She listened unwillingly, struggling to find a foothold for herself in his quick, even-flowing speech. When he spoke of his home she remembered her old grudge, and forgot everything else.

'No,' she said quickly. 'No, I will never go to your home, never! How do I know you are not deceiving me again? I see no houses anywhere such as you say there are. Besides, even though there were a hundred courts, it would still be my prison. I should be the only white woman there. No one would speak my language. There

would be a thousand miles between me and the sea. No—no—I must live on the sea so that I may know France is just over on the other side from me!'

'You do not trust me,' he said. He lay back on his pillow again. He drew the quilt to his throat and lay looking up into the curtains, his face once more a mask.

But she cried out most passionately, 'You are not of my blood—how do I know you will always treat me well? I do not know what you are!'

'You do not trust me,' he repeated, and he turned his face to the wall and closed his eyes and would speak no more.

She began to weep again, and after a while she laid herself down beside him, exhausted. But she did not touch him. Soon she was not there. A sea rolled between them, and her whole heart had sped across it to France.

'Never!' she whispered with soundless passion into the night. 'Never! I am French—I am French!'

Did not the very law also recognize that she was French? Yes, she knew that. She could never forget the first night she had learned it, and how she put the knowledge in her heart and kept it. It was that night of the dinner her husband's chief gave to his secretaries and their wives, and among these there was another white woman, a Frenchwoman also. But she was older, very sophisticated, a Parisian of the world, one could see. She had laughed at Mathilde's little short figure in the childish pink dress.

'What an infant!' she had murmured. Mathilde had not known what to say to her.

She had smoked many cigarettes, that Parisian, and she had laughed with the Chinese men and drunk with

them and danced with them, so that the silent Chinese wives along the wall sat speechless and enraged, watching her half-naked body as it writhed and turned in their husbands' arms. But once more the Parisian had come deliberately to where Mathilde sat among the wives, speechless also, for she did not even know the English that some of them did. The Parisian had laughed and said :

'So you are Su Cheng's little French wife ? How old are you—twenty, perhaps ? What a child ! '

Then she had begun to speak lazily, smoking her cigarette and dropping one to light another, 'I also—I am married to the chief secretary in the bureau. My third marriage, child ! I was dying of ennui—I said, it will be amusing perhaps for a while to be married to a Chinese. So then, it is very amusing. I find it amusing for the time. Do you not also, child ? ' She rose to meet a polished young Chinese in shining evening garb. She laid her hand upon his arm, gave herself to his embrace, and then turned to say again to Mathilde, 'But never forget, child, if it ever ceases to be amusing for us—and is there anything that does not cease to be amusing ?—then we may go to the consul. France repatriates us when we are no longer amused with our Chinese husbands ! '

She glided away, smiling at Mathilde, not seeming to see any of the Chinese women who stared after her. One of them, a young creature lovely as a water-lily in pale-green satin, sighed and gazed with wistfulness at the Parisian woman. She turned and laid the painted tip of her finger upon Mathilde's arm and asked a pleading question. But Mathilde drew away and shook her head. She did not understand.

But this one thing she had not forgotten, although

she had never seen the Parisian again: '*France repatriates us.*'

'So I could never leave the coast,' she thought to herself, beginning to tremble a little in the bed as she lay. 'It would be to cut myself off for ever from my France, from my *maman*, my papa—from them all. How could I ever get to the coast and to the consul, if I went inland so far? It is a thousand miles!'

And after a while, lying in the darkness alone, the sea rolling between her and that other body, silent and alien, she suddenly confessed to herself what she had never confessed before. 'The truth is, I am afraid. I am afraid of these yellow people. When I go out, I am afraid of them all. I have no friend anywhere. I want to go home—I am afraid, even of *him*!'

She planned carefully when she would tell him. She would not, after all, run away—as she had thought she would. At first in the night she had thought she would simply go to the consul and tell him she wanted to be repatriated—that is, to return to her France. Then she would go away secretly. When Cheng came home one day she would be gone and there would be the end of it.

Then he could do as he liked. His old uncle might come and live here and smoke and cough and be as dirty as he liked. Cheng could gamble also, since he loved his friends so well he could not refuse them. Or he and his brother could go home. No, but would Cheng go home? There was the woman in the other apartment—would she let him go home? She was bold—not a serious woman; she had lovers, and deceived her husband. All those Shanghai women did that—made rich old men love them and divorce their plain old wives to marry them. That woman looked at Cheng as a woman looks at a man she would like to make her lover. She,

Mathilde, had never had a lover, but she knew. Any woman knows. If such a thing were to be, could she go?

Yes, she could and would go, nevertheless! What did she care what happened here when she was safe in the snug little house in Lyons again? They would be so happy to see her, papa and *maman* and her little brother. Was she not the only daughter? There was also the good Pierre. Later, perhaps, if she married Pierre, she would be so safe and happy, so busy going about the safe and beautiful streets, into the nice little shops, greeting her friends everywhere. She would cry to them all, 'But it was impossible, *chérie*! You were so right! No Frenchwoman——' What would she care then what happened here?

So across the breakfast-table she looked at Cheng. The old slatternly serving-woman had pattered in and set the food down upon the table and gone out again. Mathilde, looking at Cheng, decided suddenly that she would tell him now, after all. Then she would know the worst he could do.

'I am going to my country,' she said loudly. 'I cannot live here any more. I want to go home.'

Cheng stopped in his delicate, half-hearted eating and glanced at her. He averted his eyes and began to eat again. She waited.

'It is not the first time you have said this,' he answered at last, without apparent interest. She continued to stare at him steadily. It was true she had said these same words at other times when she had been angry. But she had not meant them as she meant them to-day. To-day she was not angry. She said quickly, in the same loud tone:

'This time I mean it. I am going next week.'

He did not look up. He stirred his chopsticks lightly in a bowl to find the bit of salt fish he liked. 'I have not the money to spare you now,' he said, speaking with effort. 'It is an expensive journey. Later, I hope to be able to give you the money so that you may visit your parents again. I may even go with you. At present you must remember we are in hard times. I cannot.'

He rose, and taking a cup of water he rinsed his mouth in the Chinese fashion she hated. She hated everything he did, she thought sullenly, watching him. He seated himself and picked up a small book of soft paper from the bookcase in the corner of the room. He began to read the Chinese letters, and now a faint interest showed in his face. But she knew this interest had nothing to do with her. She watched him heavily. Now she remembered something her father had said when first he found out his daughter was in love with an Oriental. Then she had not understood, but now, all at once, she understood.

'The flesh,' he had muttered, looking away from her, 'the flesh crawls——'.

She remembered this, and she remembered that Pierre, whose voice was always deep, had said in the strangest high voice, 'He will kiss you, Mathilde; how will you bear it?'

But, after all, Cheng did not kiss her. It was not the custom of his race. It remained that Pierre was the only man who had ever kissed her. Once he had kissed her when she was sixteen and they were together at a party at the New Year. He had pulled her behind a door and kissed her suddenly and hard. But soon she had forgotten it, because Cheng had come and he was so beautiful to her.

Yes, she had loved Cheng's body well, for a time. It was smooth. It was golden. In Lyons he had always been immaculate, always perfectly groomed, his hands fragrant, his hair polished into smoothness. In those days he was all that Pierre, stocky and red-faced, could never be. There had been nothing about Cheng then to turn a woman's flesh.

Yet when they had come back to his own country how quickly he had slipped into being some one else! He ate in the way they all did; he took on a score of small strange ways. His very flesh seemed to assume some faint strange reek of his own race. If she had let him wear the robes he longed to wear he would have become completely strange to her. But now, in spite of his foreign clothes, the sight of him revolted her. She added this moment to the heap of hatreds she had against him —hatreds she scarcely understood.

'This time I do not need your money,' she said. 'This time I will repatriate myself!'

At this he put his book down. But he answered nothing for minutes. He sat and looked out of the window at the wet blank wall of the next building.

'We have no children to bind us,' he said at last. His voice was strange and thin. 'You have never given me a single child.'

It was the first complaint he had ever made against her. In the beginning he had often spoken of a child and longed for a child, but of late he had said no more. But even so he had never complained until now. It came to her dimly that perhaps at this moment he also was adding something to a hidden heap of hatreds of his own.

The question leaped from her lips. 'Then you do not care if I go?' Strange, that she was not angry—

strangely, she even half-wished he would not let her go so easily!

'I have not satisfied you,' he said. He locked his slender hands upon his knees and sat looking at them. He began to turn the thumbs slowly. 'I know I have not satisfied you. Western women are hard to satisfy. They must be housed and clothed in the way they wish, and fed, and besides this they must be loved as courtesans are loved, even though there is no reward of a child. I have not the strength for it. Let me tell you something also. I do not complain, but it is not easy to rise in one's position in the Government when one is married to a Western woman. My friends—they distrust me. They say they do not know where my heart is. In the bureau I cannot rise.'

So this was yet another thing laid upon the heap of hatreds between them. She said bitterly, 'Doubtless you are glad to have me go, then. After I am gone you can marry a Chinese woman.'

'No—no,' he said quickly. But after a while he added in a low voice, 'At least, not soon.'

He seemed about to speak more, but he did not. He continued to look at his hands. Between them the sea roared.

Yet it was soon over. She packed her box. She even put into it some silk embroideries, a Chinese coat to show them at home, a scroll, a fan. She had thought to herself that she never wanted to see anything Chinese again, but still at the end she had put these things into her box.

She climbed the gangway of the ship and at that last moment she turned to give her hand, half-hesitating, to Cheng. But he did not take it. He did not touch her. Not once in all these days had he touched her. He

bowed to her and smiled, and then he went back to the wharf and stood there, since there was nothing more to be said between them. Whenever Mathilde glanced at him she saw him smiling that faint, fixed smile.

But Mathilde did not smile. She was half-dazed now at what she had done. It had come about so quickly, and yet it was done. She watched the crowded wharf, the shouting, sweating coolies, the noisy vendors. She looked out over the packed dark roofs of the city. Then she remembered the narrow streets, the many faces there which had stared at her with apathy or hatred. She looked quickly at Cheng. He was not looking at her. How like the many faces his was now! His face was lost among the others.

'I need never see him again—never, never!' she told herself. 'I am finished with it. I am finished with them all. I am going home.'

So the consul had said to her, also. He had pursed his full lips and pulled at his little dyed moustache. 'Ha, another one!' he had exclaimed. 'Madame, I say to you also, you realize that it is for ever? France repatriates but once!'

'Yes, yes, monsieur,' she had answered eagerly. 'I am never coming back!'

Now the ship pulled loose. The crowd roared and milled, and coolies leaped across the widening chasm of water and on to the wharf. Mathilde's eyes went to Cheng. In the midst of the crowd he stood motionless, looking at her now, but smiling no more. She moved her eyes away from him. She did not wish to see him. She wanted him to become altogether one of that crowd.

'Now I need never see any of them again,' she said to herself over and over. 'It is the last time. I am going home.'

She turned and went to her cabin.

At the end of the voyage there came at last that first evening towards which she had looked with such eagerness during the long and lonely voyage. Lying in her bunk in the second-class cabin, eating silently among the second-class passengers in the tawdry dining-saloon, walking the bit of deck alone, she had dreamed of the first evening in the little parlour in the house at Lyons. Steadfastly she had looked forward to it, shunning all companionship upon the boat. She would not tell any one about herself. Let it be forgotten now that she had been married to a Chinese.

Yes, let it all be forgotten! If sometimes what lay behind her came pouring into her memory, she pushed it away again resolutely. Cheng's golden skin—how he had been beautiful sometimes! But no, she would not think of that. Let her rather remember that gawky brother of his, snuffing his nose with his fingers. Ah, let her remember how filthy they all were, those Chinese! Let her remember only the few wretched rooms in which she had lived, the clack of the gambling far into the night, the hole of a kitchen. Above all, let her remember her loneliness, the strange language she could not learn, the hostile crowds upon the street—staring, curious, ready to laugh or curse at her. Yes, among them she was always alone and strange—although to one of them she had given herself. But, better let her remember nothing now, only look forward to that little house, her own clean little home in Lyons, where *maman* and papa and the little brother waited, always kind, always hearty; and where Pierre waited too.

Ah, Pierre—a good Frenchman—a true man! She

would give him everything he wanted. She would say, 'My Pierre, I made a great mistake. But let us count those years as though they never were. We are young, and to you I am as I was. Let us begin again together. See, I have forgotten these years away from you. I am here, your Mathilde.' So she would speak to him. At the ship's rail, staring out across the grey waves towards France, she planned it so a hundred times a day. 'See, Pierre, I am your Mathilde. Here—here is your Mathilde!'

Well, here she was now, the first evening. She sat looking at them all—at papa, at *maman*, at her little brother grown tall and shy in these three years she had been away. Secretly she looked also at Pierre, for he had come in at once to see her, as soon as the shop closed. Now he sat opposite her on a stiff-backed chair too small for him. He stared at her, his knees wide apart, his thick hands on his knees. He had grown fat and he looked strange to her, and changed; he was as silent as ever.

She sat silent too and constrained, on the sofa beside her father. He clapped his arm about her shoulders, gazed at her, and he cried boisterously across the stem of his pipe, laughing, his little grey eyes twinkling.

'This Pierre, he is not married yet, Mathilde! No, he never looks at any girl since you went away—*hein*, Pierre?'

Pierre turned a slow red, but before he could gather himself to speak, *Maman* said sharply above the stocking she was darning—*Maman* seemed not so cheerful as she used to be:

'Times are very hard, Jean! A young man marries himself with care these days. Besides, there is her divorce to manage somehow. We are respectable people, Jean!'

Pierre blushed more thickly and glanced at Mathilde. She caught the glance and turned away her eyes. She felt suddenly a little faint, filled with a dismay. Had she been dreaming of *this* Pierre? How fat his body was—his wrists and hands how coarse—how scarred the skin upon his face! She had not remembered those scars—what were they? And his eyes she had remembered so wide and blue; but they were smaller somehow, and not very blue. His garments even were not over clean! This was not the young lover she had seen in her fancy when she cried across the waves, 'See, here is your Mathilde!'

As though she had spoken, Pierre muttered uneasily, 'I came as I was, from the shop. When they said Mathilde had returned, I came——'

'But naturally, my son!' cried her father gaily, beginning to laugh again loudly. 'Who cares how an honest man looks? As for me, *Maman*, though it be hard times, it is true, yet it is not too hard for me to keep my girl—as long as I am allowed, that is!' He chuckled a little, and then, suddenly serious, he took the pipe from his mouth and said with passion, 'Ah, my girl, how shall I say what it is to me to have you home from that savage country? I was wretched—a thousand times, every day, I prayed the good God to bring you home to me somehow. I do not ask why, now—I do not ask how you have suffered. You are here. Some day you will tell me everything. I am glad he is not here, or I would kill him. He has tortured you!'

But she did not answer; she could not answer.

Yes, she was here. . . . She looked at Pierre; she looked about the room. Yes, she was here. How small and close the rooms were, not larger really than those she had hated! Or did they seem small because Pierre

and her father—all of them—were so coarse and big-boned? Even her little brother was so. Why, her brother had the same loose adolescent look Cheng's brother had! Oh, she would never be able to tell them anything, never! Yet what was there to tell? If Cheng had but once beaten her! What if the things he had said about the hundred courts were true? Perhaps she ought to have—— It may be she could have believed in him.

What was the matter with her? The sea which had rolled between them when she had lain beside Cheng, this sea now rolled between them in truth. Yet now Cheng was the one who seemed the most real to her—more real than these who sat here with her, of whom she had dreamed. Suddenly he was present, as he had not been when she was with him. She saw him, slight and courteous and beautiful again, as he had been used to look beside Pierre. This—this Pierre! It was true he was only a common working man. Had she once really let him kiss her? What was it her father had said? 'The flesh—the flesh crawls——'

Oh, where had her happiness gone? She had been sure for so long that it was here, in this room, with these people! She had wanted so greatly to come home, to be repatriated. . . . Now she was repatriated. Well, then, what was wrong with her? She did not know. Only everything was not as she had thought it would be, not so good as she had thought. Where could she go now, to what now could she return?

There was no return. She had cried so eagerly to the little consul, 'I am never coming back!' It was true—she could never go back. They would never understand her wavering—none of them would understand. Cheng, even, would not understand. How could he, since she

did not understand herself? Even if she had the money —but she did not have it; yet supposing she had the money, to return would be to give up all her pride. She would be at the mercy then of those hostile yellow crowds. Ah, would she not be at their mercy if of her own will she went back to them, knowing them? It would all be as it was before, if she went back—still the hateful rooms, that brother-in-law, still the crowds. Still she would not dare to leave the coast, still she would not dare quite to trust Cheng and all his stories of the hundred courts. Oh, she knew herself, it would all be as it had been—only worse, for France repatriates but once.

Then out of herself she knew a sudden thing. Of course Cheng would be married! Whom would he marry? That painted Shanghai woman? No, he would not marry *her*—not that one, who would give him no son. Oh, Cheng would marry a woman this time who would give him a son—she knew it. What had he said? 'We have no children to bind us. You have never given me a single child.' This time he would listen to his uncle, to his father. They would say, 'You chose the first time, and you were mistaken. This time take the one we choose, and give us sons.'

Mathilde leaned forward, out of her father's embrace, and covered her face with her hands.

'Ah, my piteous one!' her father cried. 'Ah, how you have suffered!'

She did not answer. She sat motionless, her face hidden. Let them think what they would. She was in a despair of strangest jealousy of that Chinese woman. Yet why? But, naturally, that Cheng would do. Could she ask otherwise, who had left him of her own will? So he would wed himself and so have the sons he wanted.

Or would that woman's flesh seem to him too dark, and not so fair as hers had been against him? Would he remember her? It must be so—it must be so. She would come between him, too, and that other woman, as he came between her and Pierre. Oh, he would be spoiled, too, as she was, for any life. She knew it would be so. There was no return for either of them. They were divided in themselves—having once been united, for ever divided. Somehow for the moment she was comforted a little; why, she did not know, since there was no true comfort anywhere to one so bewildered as she.

Only she must stay—that she knew. To-morrow, perhaps even to-night, for in their kindness papa and *maman* would leave her alone a little while with Pierre; perhaps even to-night she must say those words to him. Well, then, she would say them; she would go and put her hand on his thick red hand and say steadfastly the words she had so often planned. She would say:

'See, Pierre. I made a mistake. Let those years be forgotten. Pierre; here is your Mathilde.'

Yes, so she would speak, to-night if she must—certainly to-morrow. . . .

Suddenly her father clapped his hand again upon her shoulder and with his other hand he took his pipe from his lips to speak. But she, feeling the heavy touch upon her flesh, cried out, not knowing that she did, 'Don't, papa!'

And she moved, restless and afraid, from under his hairy hand.

THE RAINY DAY

IT was a dark and rainy day in November—so dark, indeed, that the light of mid-afternoon scarcely penetrated the rice-paper of the latticed windows in the small living-room of a middle-class Chinese home. A shaft of this dull light came through the open door, and falling across the floor fell upon a pair of scrolls which hung upon the whitewashed wall above the wooden table set against it. Upon the scrolls were written very clearly and beautifully in black ink certain adages from the classics. These adages were ones well known and dealt with filial piety.

About this shaft of light sat a circle of people. At the innermost part of the circle in the seat of honour at the left of the table directly under the scrolls was old Mr. Li, Teh-tsen's grandfather. He was speaking first, as was his right. He had prepared his words very carefully beforehand, and now he raised and dropped his voice in measured cadence, ending each rounded sentence with an appropriate remark based on the classics. He had begun by clearing his throat and spitting upon the damp brick floor. Then he had passed his delicate old hand, with its long, yellow nails, over his beard, which spread sparsely down the front of his gown. His gown was of grey cotton, and it was spotted with bits of food dropped from his bowl of rice at meal-time. In his other hand he held a long bamboo pipe. It was black with age and when he used it, it gurgled with accumulated richness.

He continued to stroke his yellowish white beard for some time slowly, while all the others waited for him to

speak. Only Teh-tsen's youngest brother dared to be impatient, and to tap his foot restlessly and almost noiselessly upon the brick floor. But then he was the old man's favourite, and dared to do what others did not. As for Teh-tsen himself, he sat very carefully and correctly sidewise upon his seat in a lowly position at the end of the circle near the door. The old grandfather looked from one to the other of this family. It was evident that he enjoyed their waiting for him. But at last he began to speak, his eyes fixed, not on Teh-tsen, whom he was addressing, but upon the fringe of rain dropping from the tile eaves upon the worn stone threshold.

'You are now returned to your people,' said the old man, gazing at the rain and speaking in a high, quavering voice. 'Four months you have been idle at home. You have not found a position whereby your industry and your Western learning, which we have given you, may support honourably your grandfather and your parents and your brothers and sisters.

'What say the Ancients? A son should sacrifice his own flesh that his parents may feed thereon. This you have not done. You have forgotten that we, your relatives, accumulated with great pain the money wherewith you were sent to the outer countries, that you might get their learning. Even your third cousin, who, as you well know, is only a poor merchant in a small shop, gave his savings, in all twenty dollars, that you might become educated in the Western manner and so rise the more quickly to a high position. To him also is due a return.

'What say the Ancients? The son who does not nourish his own family, and especially his grandfather and his parents, let him be less than dog.'

The old man stopped to clear his throat. In the interval a stout man in a short, black cotton coat and trousers, who sat at the other side of the table in the next seat of honour, hastened to speak.

'Not the least evil of all these things, my father, is that this unworthy son of mine refuses to marry the maid to whom he has been betrothed since he was a child, and who, as you know, has lived in this house as a daughter to us since her own father and mother died in childhood. He speaks of Western customs. We did not bid him learn the Western customs, but only the Western books, that he might find a place with higher remuneration. Now he deprives us of grandchildren. He deprives us of any one to worship our tablets when we have ascended into heaven. He ordains, this worthless son, that we, his grandparents and parents, shall go into the land of spirits and have no one to care for us.'

Teh-tsen himself listened to these words with extreme dismay. He was a dapper young man with a pale, rather delicate face, his mouth as small and pretty as a girl's mouth. He wore foreign clothing, a pale grey suit he had bought in Chicago. On the street he swung a cane and appeared self-sufficient and elegant as he went down the street looking at no one. But here in this dim room among his elders in their long gowns he shrank into a rather insignificant youth, narrow-chested and timid. He sat with his hands between his knees, rubbing his soft palms slowly back and forth against each other.

He gazed from one to the other of his relatives—his grandfather, nodding his head at the father's words, his rheumy eyes fixed on the falling rain; his father, stout, impatient with much food; his uncle, a thin selfish face and nervous, slightly dirty hands; his brother, an

impudent boy, eager to be away, and peeping secretly out into the street. In a corner apart sat his mother upon a stool, a somewhat bent figure in blue cotton garments. She was wiping her eyes on her apron. Behind these four figures he saw in his mind's eye many others, avaricious, greedy cousins, his crabbed old merchant uncle, all those eager to share the income he was expected to bring in with his superior education. They were hands—claws—talons—grasping for everything he could produce.

They had educated him, then, he saw now, merely because he had happened to be the brightest boy in the clan, the one with the quickest brains. They had educated him merely as an investment for old age. A furious rage filled him. A torrent of burning, reckless words rose in his throat. He waited an instant, setting his teeth sharply over them. He knew, of course, that it would be idle to speak. He had no redress from his own people. In these days they had the power over him—they could even kill him if they liked. To be sure, this could scarcely happen, but the thought reminded him of his helplessness.

Yet centuries of self-control behind him stood him in good stead now. He rose and bowed deeply to his grandfather. Then he bowed to his father, and then to his uncle. Lastly he bowed to his mother, and he knew she yearned over him secretly, although she dared not speak.

'I pray you forgive me, honourable ones,' he said in a low voice. 'I will try to be more dutiful.'

He was conscious again of the wave of anger rising in him. He steadied himself and walked stiffly from the room and across the courtyard. He went out into the street. The rain fell in straight sombre lines, steadily

and drearily, and the dampness between the high brick walls on either side of the narrow way was as chill as death. The shallow gutters along the street overflowed with waste and filth so that the cobble-stones ran with a viscous, black, evil-smelling liquid. It rose against his polished tan shoes and left a stain.

He uttered an exclamation of disgust. He remembered that only the week before he had called upon the magistrate of this town and asked permission to organize a sanitary street association. The magistrate had been suave, had complimented him upon his modern civic spirit, had promised nothing.

Teh-tsen looked bleakly ahead through the long, straight lines of falling rain. How could his town, his country, progress with such magistrates as these? How helpless he was against all those in power—how helpless every one was!

The rain beat upon his smart felt hat and dripped from the brim. The hat was rapidly softening in the dampness, drooping over his eyes. His clothes were beginning to feel wet against his skin. He walked on.

Could it be that it was only six months ago he had been standing on the platform in the huge auditorium of an American university to receive his degree? He had been given a prize as well for his essay on the comparison of Eastern and Western philosophy. It had been a brilliant piece of work, so his professors told him. How proud he had been! He had been, they said, one of the best students ever graduated from the university. This was good praise when one remembered that all his work was done in the foreign tongue. But when he was graduated he had only one thought. It was to come back to his native town, to his native country, and give all he had for its development. He had come back sure

of himself, glad to see his family, confident of their pride in him.

And then immediately they had fallen upon him like carrion crows! The very first night his father had talked with him concerning the salary he must demand from the local government school should he teach there.

'I should like to consider the service I can render the country first,' Teh-tsen had said hesitatingly. 'If the school seems the most——'

His father stared at him, his fat yellow cheeks hanging. 'You think of yourself only!' he exclaimed. 'I am now ready to retire from active business. The times are hard and the shop is not paying. Your brother must be cared for. Your uncle is unwell and is unable to work. Besides, there are not a few of our relatives who gave you money for your education. They will at least expect rice from you. More than that, your future wife is in the house. While you were gone all those years her parents died, and your mother needed help and there is no use in hiring an extra servant when one has a daughter-in-law. These are all dependent upon you. You are the eldest son now as I was in my time. I am weary.'

Teh-tsen had been confounded. Somehow he had forgotten these things were. He had been away so long—eight years! And then he thought of the dull-faced slovenly girl he had seen about. He had imagined her a servant when he first came. His wife? A sick rebellion rose in him whenever he thought of her and his heart beat quickly. Never! He had even had angry words with his father. But it had all been to no purpose. They were determined to bend him to their will, these relatives of his, planning together to break down his resistance by sheer, ponderous immovability. He was

smothering under it. Worst of all, he was terrified to feel himself weaker under the calm, inexorable pressure of family opinion. He was not so sure as he had been that he was right. His ideals were no longer as they were when he stepped from the ship's gang-plank upon the coast. Those ideals—they had now become dimmed and remote, scarcely worth fighting for any more. After all, he was only one person. What could he do among so many who cared nothing for better ways of living and thinking?

He perceived now that his shoes were sticky with street filth, and his trousers were bespattered. He had come away in his haste without his top-coat and the penetrating, ceaseless downpour had wet him through. He could feel the icy water trickling between his shoulders. The sky was a sodden lead colour. The rain continued to fall straightly.

He shivered and wondered if there were in this whole town any spot that was warm. His own room at home was as cheerless as the rest of the house on such a day, its brick floor exuding moisture and the drops of wet standing upon the walls. Besides, meagre as this room appeared to him after his years away, he was compelled to share it with his brother, and he remembered now with fresh anger how this brother examined carelessly his beloved books, and how he left finger stains upon the white margins of the pages. Only yesterday Teh-tsen had found his most valued philosophy textbook with a sheet torn out of the middle. His brother had torn it to wrap about some small coins before thrusting them into his belt. There was no privacy anywhere.

Staring through the rain, Teh-tsen wondered how he could get warm. If he were once really warm again he might find a little courage somehow to go on with his

purpose. He feared more than anything that he might be weak enough to give up, to marry the ignorant woman, to throw away his life. Then a new anxiety came into his mind. He cried to himself:

'And what of my own sons, then, with such a mother, born into such a house? Shall I bring forth others to this life of mine?'

He had not thought of them before. He imagined them, their tiny hands clasped, begging not to be born. 'No, no, I will not,' he promised them eagerly in his heart.

A tall house loomed up suddenly before him, a foreign house. Ah, there was where Mr. Hemingway lived, his old teacher when he had been a boy in the grammar school! He had been a kind man, a young American, full of earnestness. He would go in and see him. Perhaps he could get warm. He might even talk with Mr. Hemingway and tell him his difficulties and get a little help—a little encouragement.

He mounted the shallow stone steps to the veranda that ran around the house and rang the door-bell. Then he waited, his coat collar turned up and his hands thrust into his pockets for warmth. The vines upon the house were beaten flat with the rain, and the ground was spongy with it. Leaves were fluttering down, brown and wet. The door opened slowly. It was Mr. Hemingway. How he had aged! He was now a stooped, rather sad man, who peered at Teh-tsen uncertainly.

Teh-tsen put out his hand.

'You do not remember me, Mr. Hemingway? I was your pupil when I was a little boy. I have been away for many years. Now I come to see you again.'

'Ah, yes—yes——' said Mr. Hemingway uncertainly.

He had had many students, and he did not remember Teh-tsen. 'Come in.'

Teh-tsen stepped into the hall. Oh, how warm it was! He followed Mr. Hemingway into the study. Oh, heavenly warmth! A small stove crackled in one corner of the room. Teh-tsen stood before it, his clothes steaming.

'Dear me, I am afraid you are wet,' said Mr. Hemingway, staring at him. He was very near-sighted.

'Only a little,' answered Teh-tsen modestly.

'Yes, yes,' said Mr. Hemingway absently. There was a high pile of papers to be corrected on the desk and he had planned for an undisturbed afternoon. He was feeling wretched to-day, too, with a cold coming on—this rain! If he had an assistant now—but of course there was never enough money for things as it was, and certainly not enough for these young Western-trained Chinese who demanded such impossible salaries nowadays. Here was this young fellow probably wanting a job or something. He had better see what was wanted, anyway.

Teh-tsen seated himself. He hovered as near the cheerful, robust little stove as was consistent with politeness. He stared about the bare little study appreciatively, enviously. Books—warmth—privacy; what a fortunate man Mr. Hemingway was! It was easy to be good and noble and strong in such surroundings.

He felt the delicious warmth creeping into his flesh. He began to long to open his heart to Mr. Hemingway. Perhaps the opportunity would come soon. He felt quick words begin to shape themselves in him and rise to his lips, ready to pour out.

Mr. Hemingway asked a few questions. Teh-tsen

spoke politely of Mr. Hemingway's country—wonderful country, wonderful people——

'I hope,' said Mr. Hemingway with a little severity, 'that you will use your knowledge now for the good of your own country. China needs you—— There are many unfortunate——'

Teh-tsen listened. Now they were getting to it. He could tell his fears and longings soon. He did truly want to help his country, but——

'Still, I hope you have an attitude different from most of these young men who come back from England and America and France,' Mr. Hemingway went on in a slightly higher tone of voice. He thought of the precious afternoon slipping past, and the sight of the pile of uncorrected papers began to harass him. His head was aching. If only he could hire an assistant! Really it was too much to expect of a man working alone. But the scarcity of funds——

'The trouble with all of you,' he continued, his irritation rising uncontrollably, 'is that you think of nothing but money, you want nothing but money. You want easy jobs and no responsibility and high salaries. Nothing else will please you. Meanwhile, the hard posts where service is greatly needed for the people go unfilled. Will none of you have any courage? I must confess, Mr.—ah—Mr. Lé, that I am very much disappointed in the Chinese students returned from Western countries.'

The room was quiet. Mr. Hemingway played with a paper-knife at his desk and glanced unconsciously at the clock on the wall. He was a good man who had borne much. He had not had a furlough in eight years, and would not go now because no one had been sent to take his place in the school, and he was tired and

discouraged. Moreover he was a true teacher who had always to work with insufficient materials and this had gradually broken him.

The rain beat monotonously against the window-panes. The silent room began to fill with tense feeling. Mr. Hemingway thought of all his disappointments, and somehow this young Chinese in his smartly cut Western clothes seemed to personify them. The young man felt suddenly that he was back in the conclave of harshness in the dingy room of his home. Misunderstanding chilled their hearts. The room seemed no longer warm.

Teh-tsen rose and bowed. This, after all, had been a respected teacher. He must not forget his own breeding and politeness.

'I grieve that we disappoint you, sir, and I bid you good-bye, sir,' he said proudly, and went again into the street. He felt suddenly weak, and a sob came into his throat. He stared resolutely ahead to keep back tears, and he began to walk, wholly regardless now of the flowing filth against his shoes.

How it rained! The warmth of the few minutes was soon dissipated, and he felt tired and dispirited. Where could he go now? He could only go home—there was no other place for him. It meant giving up. But life was insupportable. He would have to sacrifice himself as others had done and as others would have to do in this old country—throw away his dreams—crush out his individual longings. He would have to marry. The law could compel him—the old, invincible law of the centuries not yet broken and cast away. He thought of the sullen face of his betrothed—of her unkempt hair. What was she but a servant, cheaply bought? His memory presented him cruelly with a hundred pretty faces, gay faces, the faces of the girls at that American

university. They might marry whom they chose—even women there could marry as they chose. He thought of the young men who had been his classmates. They would choose, too, each would choose among the pretty girls who were their equals. But they could not help him. It was idle even to think of them.

He turned his head aside restlessly and looked from one side of the street to the other. The dark brick houses huddled together silently in the steady cold rain. How he wished he could get away! But he had no money of his own. If he could run away to Tientsin, to Shanghai even, he could find work and be free. But then, he thought bitterly, he never could be free. Wherever he was they would reach him, force his return. And, after all, could he be free in himself? Could he bear to be an outcast from his clan? An eldest son could scarcely so forget himself. No, he had better keep his self-respect, at least.

The streets were now nearly empty of people. A few beggars crept about, whining and drenched. A woman hurried past him to buy hot water, her kettle in her hand and her patched apron thrown over her head, the two ends caught in her teeth, to protect her from the rain. A child walked sedately home from school under an enormous oiled paper umbrella. The short November day was darkening. It continued to rain. Soon it would be night. He must go somewhere, for he was wet and chilled to his very bones. Of course he must go home. But going home was to give himself up. Well, there was nothing else for him.

He turned his steps slowly towards his home. The future years passed before him—drab, full of work of some sort perhaps, but always with emptiness within. He seemed to see again that fantastic, sentimental

picture of his own children, begging not to be born. And then it came to him in a flash of light the service he could render them at least. He stopped and stared through the rain, a smile breaking across his face. How stupid he had been all this long, rainy day! He stopped at the little apothecary's shop on the corner and gave a low order. The fussy little shopkeeper bent his head.

'Three pills of black opium?' he repeated softly. 'Ah, yes——'

He wrapped them furtively in a bit of brown paper and gave them to the young man, and his yellow hand curled about the money dropped into it.

Then Teh-tsen walked home erect, his head up, regardless of the rain upon his face. Strange he had not thought of this before! He smiled a little. After all, it was not necessary that he should have gone abroad and spent all the money to learn. In this moment of crisis it had not been any of his American professors who had taught him what to do. Not one of them had told him how to live. True, they had helped him to write the brilliant essay. It was wrapped up carefully in oiled silk and put away into the bottom of his trunk together with his diploma and some other things he did not use every day. No, this was now the time-honoured revenge his ancestors had used, the time-honoured protest against a world awry, which was to be his solution, his self-sacrifice now.

He entered again the courtyard of his home. The kitchen opened on the left of the gate. The door was wide open and the fire from the brick cooking-stove shone upon the face of a stupid, sullen girl who was feeding grass into the stove. He shivered a little and set his lips. Ah, he had decided wisely!

He went into the living-room. It was empty now.

On the table was a pot of tea and two bowls. He felt of the pot. It was cold. Everything was cold, he thought with a touch of irritation—this miserable, cold rain! He poured a little of the cold tea into a bowl and rinsed it out and threw the rinsing on the floor. He placed the pills in the centre of the bowl. Then he poured in a little tea very carefully. Three black pills in an ounce of tea. He swallowed them and drank another gulp of the cold tea.

Then he went into his room. It was dark and for once he had it to himself. His brother had not yet returned. He went to bed and took off his ruined shoes and pulled his dripping coat from his shoulders. Then without troubling to remove his other clothing he lay down and turning his face to the wall, he dragged the quilt up around his shoulders and, shivering, he closed his eyes for sleep.

On the tile roof over his head the rain beat steadily down with a soft, soothing murmur. The day slipped gently into night.

REVOLUTION

WANG LUNG

WANG LUNG was the son of Wang the Farmer. All his life he had lived in the Wang village on the borders of the city of Nanking, and, since he daily carried green vegetables into the city to sell, he was no common, ignorant fellow. He knew, for instance, sooner than any one else in the village, when the Emperor finally relinquished the throne Indeed, the event could not have taken place more than a year before he heard of it. He at once informed his father, who told his uncle, and his uncle, who was the village letter-writer, told all the villagers who came to beg him to write to their relatives, and in a short time every one knew of it.

For three days at least they all spoke in whispers, being much distressed and hourly expecting catastrophe. No one, of course, had ever seen the Emperor, but still each person had felt him to be a supporting, eternal power, the Son of Heaven, who arranged matters with the magistrates in the upper regions. In short, one could leave both the welfare of the nation and one's own little sins to the Emperor while one tended the garden and took vegetables in the spring and ducks in the autumn to sell in the market-place. Now, with the Emperor gone, no one dared to leave the village. Indeed, Wang the Grandfather, who perfectly remembered the time of the Taipings, immediately expected looting and robbery. So he gathered together certain family valuables, such as the deed to the land, a coat of goatskin, dingy from generations of use and yet good for several more, and some bits of silver, and secreted them

in the hollow mud wall of the house. Three days he sat stroking his sparse, yellow-white beard, his eyes fixed on the loosened earth, and at night he ordered his bed moved out and slept beneath it.

But, since nothing happened by the end of the fourth day, he took the treasure from its hiding-place, grumbling and a bit disappointed, and people began to go about their business again, although at first a little fearfully. At last, however, they no longer felt any need of the Emperor, and, as time passed, they even began to rejoice that he was gone, since their crops were as good every year as if he had intervened for them with Heaven.

Indeed, one day in the tea-shop in the city, Wang Lung heard a young man cry in a loud voice over his tea-bowl that emperors were but idle fellows and cost the nation a great deal of money. Wang Lung was struck with cold horror at this speech and at such disdain of the honourable dead, and he watched for a long time to see whether a tile would not fall from the roof upon the young man or whether he would not choke over his tea and die. But, when nothing of the sort occurred, Wang Lung, after reflecting with some effort, because thinking was never easy, decided that the young man must have spoken the truth, so that the gods did not dare to rebuke him. He gazed respectfully at the young man.

The young man wore a long gown of dark blue cloth, neither heavy nor light, but perfectly suited to the season, which was the third month of spring. His hair was cut very close to his head and oiled as smoothly as a woman's.

'This man must be from southern parts,' Wang murmured to himself, 'since I have not seen his like before.'

The young man was talking rapidly and casting quick eyes over the crowd in the tea-shop. When he saw Wang Lung staring at him, he smoothed back his brow with his long, pale hands and raised his voice a little :

'We Chinese have more people than any other country in the world, and all foreign countries should fear us. Nevertheless they despise us because we have no fire-wagons and fighting-ships. Yet these are simple things. In the ancient times did not our wise men ride upon the clouds of fire and upon dragons breathing out smoke ? What has been done, can be done again. Now we are a republic and the Emperor is dead. All things are possible.'

Wang Lung had come nearer, and, stooping, he picked up the hem of the young man's gown and inquired politely :

'May I ask how much this gown cost ? ' With the fine, soft cloth still between his thumb and forefinger he felt it again and muttered : 'Ah, what is this stuff ? It feels like cloud material. Sir, is this foreign goods, and how much does it cost ? '

But the young man became suddenly angry and snatched the garment away with a quick movement. 'Do not soil it with your fingers, filthy one,' he cried. 'I paid two dollars a foot for it, and it is good English woollen cloth ! '

Two dollars a foot ! Wang's mouth gaped suddenly like a fish's mouth. He did not see two dollars in a month of labour. How many feet would it take for such a gown as this, swinging to the ankles and clinging about the throat, even to the very ears ? While the young man continued to speak of republics, Wang Lung reflected carefully upon the amount of blue cotton cloth he had bought for his wedding garment six years before.

Five feet for the front, five for the back, five for the sleeves—say, a ten-foot length and a half—say, a bit of extra thrown in, as was the custom when one bought ten feet of cloth at the shop. It would all come to not less than twenty-eight rounds of silver. He was aghast at such wealth. Twenty-eight dollars, a year's income, wrapped about the fragile body of this short-haired youth! 'It is very dear,' he murmured.

The young man turned to him complacently. 'It is foreign goods grown upon the backs of English sheep and woven especially for the black-haired people by the hands of English slaves,' he explained. Then, seeing Wang Lung's astonishment and admiration, he went on in a fluent, oracular manner:

'As I was saying, we no longer need the Emperor. Our great nation may now be governed as our ancient sage has said, by the people, for the people, and of the people. Even you, my poor fellow, may have a share in deciding who is to be our president.'

'I?' said Wang, suddenly drawing back. 'I have my father and old grandfather to support and my wife and three slaves, since she has given me only girls and no son yet. Their empty mouths are for ever stretched wide around me. I have no time. Please, sir, attend to this matter for me.'

The young man laughed loudly at this and struck the table with the flat of his hand, so that every one in the tea-shop looked up and Wang, embarrassed to be so much seen, turned his face away.

'How ignorant you are, you fellow!' cried the young man. 'You have only to write a name upon a bit of paper and drop it into a box.'

'Sir, I cannot write,' pleaded Wang anxiously.

'Get some one to write for you then. Oh, how

ignorant you are!' said the young man, swallowing the last of his tea and throwing two pennies upon the table.

'Sir, I am a worm,' replied Wang. 'But what shall I write?'

'Write the name of the man you wish to be president,' said the young man.

He spoke with such impatience that Wang Lung did not dare to ask further what 'president' might mean.

By this time many people were listening to the conversation, and the young man, turning on the threshold and resuming his former manner, said with great emphasis:

'Therefore, my countrymen, the time of prosperity is near. The rich will become poor and the poor will become rich.'

Wang pricked up his ears. How was this—the poor become rich? He ventured timidly, fearing the young man's wrath:

'Sir, how shall this be?'

'In all republics it is so,' said the young man. 'In America all men live in palaces, and only the rich are compelled to work. As soon as emperors are put away and the Revolution comes, these things happen. That is why my hair is cut off. It is to show that my spirit is free. I am a revolutionist. I and the other revolutionists will save the nation and uplift the poor and oppressed!'

He bowed and turned to go. Wang Lung still squatted upon his carrying-pole, whither he had withdrawn when the young man had been angry. He sat there now, in front of the door, staring as in a dream, and the young man could not pass because of him. 'Out of my way, you!' the young man cried, and scornfully he pushed the pole with his foot.

Wang Lung rose hurriedly, removed his baskets into the street and then stood watching the young man as he walked away, his blue gown swaying from side to side.

Of everything said, Wang had really heard only this, that the poor would become rich. This hope he had cherished all his life, but of late years he had given it up as unrealizable. His ancestors had worked upon the bit of land he was cultivating, and none had ever become rich. But now it all seemed really true ; now that the Emperor was dead, anything might happen.

He stared down the street, thinking, seeing the blue gown glow out of the grey distance. If he should become rich, he would have just such a gown as that, soft and bright and warm. He looked down his body upon his patched, yellowish trousers and upon his brown bare feet. He saw himself clothed with that warmth and brightness. But, as he bent his head, his queue fell down, rusty from sun and wind and uncombed for many days. 'How can I wear my new gown with a head like this ?' he muttered.

It seemed to him that the gown was already buttoned about him with the very same kind of small gilt buttons that had been on the young man's. So, although he had sold only a little green stuff, he counted his coins carefully and, going down the street to a travelling barber's stand, he shouted :

'Shave my head entirely, and I will pay you ten copper pieces.'

Thus Wang Lung became a revolutionist.

But he himself was not aware of the fact. When he returned to the village at evening, the villagers, idling about on the threshing-floors before the houses, saw him shaven like a priest and began to laugh. No one knew what to say except Wang Liu's only son, who went daily

to school in the city and therefore understood more than the others. He cried now:

'He is a revolutionist! My teacher says only revolutionists cut off their hair.'

Wang Lung was very much embarrassed to hear this. He knew nothing of revolutionists, and he was afraid because he had inadvertently become that which he knew not. So he put down his carrying-pole with a loud noise, that he might not appear disturbed or unlike himself, and shouted to his wife as he did every evening:

'Now then, Mother of Slaves, where is the rice? I have spent my precious breath all day to buy you food and, coming home at night in exhaustion, find not even a bowl of tea ready.'

The villagers at once saw that he was acting as usual and dispersed from his door, merely marvelling among themselves at his appearance. Nevertheless, the idle name clung to him. He was called 'Wang the Revolutionist' from that day, and gradually the name ceased to have any meaning at all except as attached to him.

As for Wang, he thought for a long time of the blue gown he would have when he became rich. At first he daily expected this miracle to happen, and, as his hair grew, he kept it smooth with two fingers wet in bean-oil. But summer followed spring, and autumn died into winter, and the year gave birth to the new year, and his life was the same as ever. He still was compelled to work from morning until night, and he still had no sons. At last he became angry to the depths of his spirit, so that at night he could not sleep upon his bed.

It was not that any one thing overwhelmed him. Rather he was beset with many vexations, which augmented his rebellion at being destined, seemingly, to have no leisure in his old age. This idea made him so

angry that he reviled his wife three times each day, saying, ' Cursed is earth full of useless seed ! '

Whenever he heard that other women had given birth to sons, he felt himself ill-used and ground his teeth together. He was angry when the price of cloth and oil and fuel rose, while he could not wrest more produce from the land. He was angry every day in the city because he saw men idling along the streets in satin and velvet and sleeping over the tables in the tea-shop and gambling on the counters of shops, while he, on his way to the market, must bend his bare back under the load to feed them. In the end, the least thing angered him; a fly, settling on his sweaty face, made him shout and leap as if at a mad dog, so that, seeing him, people cried, ' This is a madman who roars at a fly ! ' And the secret symbol of all his wrath was the blue gown he could never buy.

One day in the city he passed, as was his custom, through the Street of the Confucian Temple, and there upon a wooden box stood a young man, talking loudly. He was a mere white-faced lad, and he wore a long black cotton gown. He moved his thin, childish hands and looked restlessly over the heads of the people gathering around him. Wang Lung said to himself that he was tired and would therefore stop to hear this new thing. He sat down upon his pole and wiped his face with the towel that hung from his belt.

At first he could not understand what it was all about. He expected to hear something of emperors and republics, but instead this youth spoke of foreigners. He had a small voice, which cracked when he tried to speak loudly, and he cried :

' They have killed us and trodden upon us. They are imperialists—robbers of all nations ! '

Wang Lung listened, astonished. He knew nothing of foreigners. He had, it is true, always rather enjoyed seeing them; for they were strange to look upon and were a marvel to speak of in the village. But what manner of men they might really be, it had not entered his mind to inquire. He was not specially interested even now, and so he felt for his small bamboo pipe. At any rate he would blow a little tobacco before going on. And then he heard the lad scream in his high, wavering voice:

'These riches are ours. Houses and lands and gold and silver they have taken from us. They live like kings while we are their slaves. Steam-wagons and music-machines, clothes of blue and red and yellow satin—like kings! Down with the capitalists! A thousand thousand years to the Revolution, when the poor shall become rich and the rich become poor!'

Wang Lung started forward and dropped his pipe. The poor become rich? Again? He pressed to the lad's side and asked with a sort of surly timidity:

'Sir, when shall these things be?'

The youth turned fiery, unseeing eyes on him and answered:

'Now, now! When the revolutionists enter the city, everything is yours. Take what you like. Comrade, you are a revolutionist?'

'I am called "Wang the Revolutionist,"' answered Wang Lung simply.

But the youth was not listening to him. He was screaming again:

'Down with the capitalists, down with the foreigners, down with religion, down with imperialism! A thousand thousand years to the Revolution, when the poor shall become rich and the rich become poor!'

When Wang Lung heard these words, he knew suddenly what revolution meant. Capitalism, imperialism, religion, these words meant nothing, but he understood that the poor should become rich and the rich become poor. Ah, he was a revolutionist, then.

He stood staring at the young man and, even as he stared, a policeman suddenly appeared with a fixed bayonet and, before any one knew what he was about, placed it at the young man's back. 'Off to jail then, young revolutionist,' he said in a loud, gruff voice, 'and let us see how quickly you will become rich!' The young man, suddenly turned into a yellow-faced wraith, descended without a word and walked away, the policeman propelling him gently from behind with his bayonet. The crowd disappeared like a cloud before the sun, and Wang Lung in great terror and confusion of mind picked up his baskets and trotted rapidly towards the market.

He was very much frightened, and he said nothing all day to any one. In the evening, instead of sleeping over a bowl of green tea as he usually did, he harnessed the water-buffalo to the plough and ploughed the sweet-potato field until the moon sank behind the willow-trees and he could no longer see the furrows.

The next morning he rose at an early hour to go to the market. When he approached the city gates, he saw that upon them were pasted large fresh sheets of paper covered with characters. At these he stared for a long time, wondering what they meant, but, since he had never been able to read a character in his life, he could make nothing of them. At last he asked an aged man who was passing to read them for him, discerning by the great horn spectacles and slow walk that this was a man of learning. The scholar stopped and read every word

with great care, and Wang Lung waited patiently, although the sun rose higher and higher until its rays crept into the deep arch of the gate itself. At last the old man turned to Wang and said :

'These words concern others than you, my poor fellow. They announce that revolutionists have been found in the city and have been beheaded.'

'Beheaded ?' gasped Wang Lung.

'Yes, indeed,' answered the scholar, looking very profound. 'And furthermore it says that, if you go to the Bridge of the Three Sisters, you will see their heads in a row. Our Governor will have none of these Cantonese rebels.' And the scholar walked on, his skirts swaying from side to side in excess of dignity.

Wang Lung stood gazing at the crooked letters, sick with fear. Was he not called 'Wang the Revolutionist' ? He cursed the blue gown that had brought him to this pass. His desire for riches was quite forgotten, and some terrible dread drew him towards the Bridge of the Three Sisters. He left his baskets at the hot-water shop of an eighth cousin on his mother's side and went to the bridge, which was a mile away, although he could ill spare the time with his vegetables drying up in the heat of noon.

He saw that what the old scholar had said was true. There at the bridge, upon seven bamboo poles, were seven bleeding heads, bent on ragged, severed necks ; heads with fringes of black hair hanging over their dull, half-closed eyes. One head had its mouth open and its tongue thrust out, half-bitten off between set white teeth. Looking more closely at this head, Wang Lung saw with a leap of fear at his heart that this was the head of the lad to whom he had listened the day before. But then they were all the heads of very young men.

About the place stood a jeering crowd. An old man with broken teeth spat upon the ground and cried, 'See what happens to revolutionists!'

Wang started at the word. Revolutionists? Suppose some who knew him should pass and call out, as his acquaintances so often did, 'Ha, Wang the Revolutionist! Have you eaten?' It was an idle salutation, meaning nothing on other days but to-day meaning anything. He hurried off.

Thereafter he worked very hard indeed and spoke little. He did not even complain to his wife, so that finally she went in alarm to the blind soothsayer of the village and asked whether her husband was going to be ill. But the whole trouble was that Wang Lung continually beheld in his imagination an eighth head hanging beside the seven already there on the Bridge of the Three Sisters. In the evening, when he could no longer work, he saw very clearly his own dead face with half-shut eyes and drawn grey lips. When his third cousin passed the door and cried gaily, 'What has Wang the Revolutionist heard to-day in the city?' Wang Lung strode to the door and cursed him a thousand years and would not listen to his words of astonishment. The hardest thing was the impossibility of telling any one of his fear. To speak would have been to invite the knife to his neck.

From that day he hated everything. He hated the land that ate up his life and demanded increasing toil. He hated those neighbours of his, to whom he could not explain his fear; he despised the villagers, who were content to remain as their ancestors had been, clothed in coarse cotton and eating brown rice for ever. He hated the city with its streets full of careless, idle people.

As his hatred grew, his fear lessened. He heard no more of revolutions and was all the angrier because he saw now no way for the poor to become rich. He thought about the rich and he hated them. He knew what these rich were like. Once a year he went to pay his respects to the gentry in the village, as the custom was, and there he saw satin curtains at the doors and satin cushions on the carved chairs. Even the servants were decked out in silk. As for him, he had never touched silk in all his life except furtively at a cloth-shop, that he might know its smoothness.

And the foreigners—the lad had said they were the richest of all. Sometimes he heard in the tea-shops about them now. They sat upon chairs of gold and at tables of silver. They walked upon lengths of velvet as carelessly as he walked upon the wild grass at the side of the country roads. On their beds were covers of brocade embroidered with jewels. Riches! He grew to hate the foreigners more than anything else, because it was wrong that foreigners should live like kings so long as there was one Chinese as poor as he. At first he had only longed for the poor to become rich, but, thinking of all the wrongs he endured, he longed equally for the rich to become poor.

Turning these matters over in his mind incessantly, he ceased to work so hard. Since he was not accustomed to so much puzzling, he found it impossible to hoe and to think at the same time. He was obliged therefore to stop when his thoughts became too much for him. Since he accomplished less than of old in one day, he became poorer and poorer until his wife cried at him:

'I cannot say where the cotton wadding for our winter clothes is to come from. We shall not be able to feed our bodies within and clothe them without at the

same time.' This speech made him very angry, so angry that he ground his teeth together without knowing why.

One day in great heaviness of spirit he cast down his baskets carelessly at the tea-shop and determined not to work that day, come what might, since all his work brought him no nearer riches. He sat down at the table nearest the door and ordered a bowl of tea. There was another man at the table, a youngish man in a long, black cotton gown, with short hair brushed straight up from his forehead. As he wiped his wet face on his towel, he looked at Wang Lung and said softly, 'You work too hard, my comrade.'

'I do indeed, sir,' replied Wang Lung, sighing and pulling over his shoulders the patched grey coat he had taken off in the heat of the walk. 'But how can it be helped? With rice what it is and a house full of idle women to feed, my flesh is torn from my bones in the day's toil.'

'You are poor, bitterly poor,' whispered the young man, bending towards him, 'and you should be rich.'

Wang Lung shook his head. He would not allow himself to be disturbed again by that word 'rich' in the mouth of a young man. He poured himself a bowl of tea and sipped it loudly, thankful for its heat in his rapidly chilling body.

'You work and starve while others play and eat,' continued the young man.

'That is true,' said Wang Lung suddenly.

'Yet you are a good man and deserving of far more than they.'

Wang Lung shook his head again, smiling a little.

'Yes, this is true,' the young man insisted. 'I can see it in your honest face. Allow me to pour you more

tea.' Rising, he poured tea into Wang Lung's bowl as courteously as if Wang's coat were whole and new.

Wang Lung rose to thank him, and to himself he said: 'How wise this young man is! He discerns my quality at once.' Aloud he said, 'Sir, where is your honourable palace?'

But the young man answered, 'Oh, I am a poor man, too. But I am come to tell you and your friends that you will soon be rich. When the revolutionists come into the city——'

Wang rose hastily to his feet. 'I am no revolutionist!' he declared.

'No, no,' said the young man soothingly; 'you are a good man. I can see it.'

Wang Lung sat down again. By now the sharp air felt icy upon his sweat-dampened skin. He pulled his garment more closely about him.

'You are too poor,' said the young man. 'I pity you with all my heart.'

Wang Lung felt very sorry for himself. No one had ever pitied him before. Indeed, some had even considered him fortunate, since, though burdened with a family of women and compelled to work hard, he was his father's only son and would some day own the six acres of family land and the three-roomed, mud-plastered house. So now, at the thought that somebody realized how very poor and hard-worked and pitiable he was, tears welled up into his eyes. 'It is true,' he said in a broken voice.

'And it is very wrong,' the young man continued. 'You are a clever man. I can see it. You deserve to be rich. I say it again. But your chance is coming. When the revolutionists enter the city, the poor will become rich and the rich will become poor.'

'How?' asked Wang Lung, bending forward to catch the answer, since they were speaking very softly indeed.

The young man cast a hasty glance about.

'The foreigners are surfeited with riches beyond any one,' he replied in a whisper. 'They throw away silver as of no account, caring only for gold. The very walls of their houses are filled with gold—gold they have stolen from us Chinese. Else why do they remain in this country? Why do they not return to their own land? They take the gold from us so that you and I have none. It belongs to us. When the revolutionists come, be ready!' And immediately the young man rose and left the tea-shop.

Wang Lung, remembering the heads he had seen, did not like even to recall the young man's words. Only, when he thought of the gold possessed by others, especially the foreigners who had no right to it, he grew very bitter within. He said to himself, 'Doubtless they have whole boxes of blue gowns like mine'; and suddenly he seemed to see the blue gown again in all its first beauty, and he was sick for its warmth and brightness.

Not more than a month later he heard that the revolutionists were approaching the city. He had not forgotten what the young man said: it must be that all the years of talk about the Revolution were coming true at last. In the market one day, when he was haggling with a customer over a pound of cabbage, some one whispered in his ear: 'In ten days be ready!'

Turning quickly, Wang Lung saw the young man who had pitied him. Though he would have spoken, the man did not stay and the customer cried impatiently, 'Now then, son of a robber, two coppers!'

Wang Lung was compelled to answer as usual, 'Never! May I starve if I let it go for less than four!'

To himself he said, 'Ten days? Well, we shall see it when it comes.'

Thus he waited, half-sceptical, half-afraid. But it became evident soon that something was about to happen. Into the city poured silently, like dark water from the river, thousands and thousands of soldiers.

He marvelled, staring at the endless procession as it went by the tea-shop. 'Are these revolutionists?' he asked the waiter.

But the waiter cast him a fiery look and hissed at him:

'Be silent, O double fool! Do you want us all to be beheaded? Can you not see the coarse bones of these men and hear the rattling of the words in their throats, and the way in which they swallow bread and refuse rice? These are Northerners, anti-revolutionists, and the heads of many fools like you hang at the bridge.' Then, bending over Wang Lung to take his cup, he whispered: 'In seven days be ready!' and he went quickly away.

Those words again! Wang Lung started. Ready for what? He was by this time wholly bewildered, and, not daring to speak to any one all that day, he went doggedly about his business, avoiding the main streets where the great stream of grey-clad figures continued to pass.

Then, on the evening of the next day, a terrific noise began to descend out of the sky. Thunder roared back and forth, and the very earth shook. They were eating their supper around the table, he and his father and his grandfather, while his wife and daughters waited on them. Putting down his chopsticks to listen the better,

he discerned two noises, one a loud, intermittent bellow and the other a frantic pup-pup-pup, which he disliked very much because he had never heard any noise like it before. He rose to go out and investigate and then was afraid and turned to his wife. 'Go and see what this is,' he commanded.

She crept slowly along the wall and peered out. Something struck the earth at her feet and made her fall back; a fan-shaped spray of earth flew into the room and was scattered into the food and over the table. They were all smitten with horror; Wang Lung rushed to the wooden door, flung it across the opening and barred it tight. They sat there then in the darkness, not daring to light even the bean-oil lamp, hearing the earth as it struck upon the roof and the incessant broken noises that came out of the night.

To himself Wang Lung said in dismay: 'Is this the Revolution? We shall all be dead of it, and my life will be gone for a blue gown.'

But the next morning the noise had died into the distance. Wang Lung peered forth from his door and at once grew very angry. His plots of vegetables were ruined with holes and buried under earth. He ran out and cursed Heaven, forgetting his fears of the night before in the catastrophe that had now befallen him He collected a few heads of the remaining cabbage. There were not enough to fill one of his baskets. He went slowly into the house.

'It is the end of my days,' he said mournfully to his wife. 'The turnips do not mature for another month. What shall we eat?'

His wife sat down upon a wooden bench and rocked back and forth, wiping her eyes. 'I am as good as dead,' she sobbed. 'Nothing but evil all my days!

Nevertheless, sell the cabbage. It will bring something, and, that gone, we must starve until the turnips swell at the roots.'

Wang Lung went therefore towards the city in great dejection. But, before he had gone a third of a mile, he stopped in horror. A corpse lay across the road! He stared, unbelieving. The man's blood spread over the dust, and the edges of the pool curled over. It was not well to be seen beside a dead body. Lifting his eyes to pass on, Wang Lung noted to his astonishment a dozen or more sprawling shapes, and beyond these others. Had all the inhabitants of the city been killed by the wrath of Heaven on the preceding night? He ran breathless through the gates and found in the street a surging, singing, yelling mob.

'What is it, what is it?' he cried, speaking to the nearest men. But they were as people insane, struggling and pushing, and Wang Lung found himself swept on, unanswered, into the midst of the crowd. 'What is it, what is it?' he continued to call loudly. But no one told him, and he could walk neither forward nor backward of his own will. He began to be afraid. 'Why did I not send the Mother of Slaves this morning to the market?' he muttered to himself.

Then he heard a hoarse voice cry: 'This way to the rich man's house! This way to the foreigners!'

Instantly he knew what was happening. It was the Revolution. As his heart began to beat quickly, he gave himself to the multitude, only struggling to keep from being trampled. In the midst of the mob were soldiers, but not soldiers like the dead ones on the roadside. These were short, slender men, and they kept shouting in a sort of rhythm, 'On—on—riches—riches!'

He grew dizzy. He did not know what it was all

about, or what had happened. But he rushed on with the others until they came before a tall gate set in a brick wall. It was in a part of the city he could not recognize. Ordinarily he would not have dreamed of entering such a gate as this. But to-day the wild daring of the crowd caught him, and he felt he had a right to anything.

Two soldiers struggled forward and pounded on the gate with the butts of their guns. He stared at them and saw that their faces were flushed as if with wine and their eyes terrible and glittering like glass. They beat against the gate again and again until at last a board gave way. Then they turned to the mob. 'All is yours, now,' they cried. 'The poor shall become rich and the rich become poor. A thousand years to the Revolution!'

But the mob halted an instant, wavering. Then the boldest of those excited men and women crept through the hole and unbarred the gate, and afterwards they all passed slowly in. Wang Lung was upon the outskirts, and, when he had crawled through the gate he straightened himself and looked curiously about him for an instant at a square of smooth grass edged with trees and a row of many-coloured flowers. It was very clean and quiet, and there was no one to be seen.

The crowd straggled towards the two-story house set at the end of a brick wall. No one seemed to know quite what to do. But the two soldiers sprang upon the steps and pounded against the door. Some one unlocked it instantly. Wang Lung had a glimpse of a tall, strangely clothed figure and a white, calm face.

Then the crowd suddenly gathered itself and surged into the house, with a loud, prolonged murmur like the howl an animal gives above its prey. Hearing it, Wang

Lung was filled with a lust stronger than lust for food. He suddenly became fiercer than a wild dog, and, snarling like the others, he rushed ahead, pushing and fighting through the narrow doorway. Once within, they halted; then they swept up a flight of stairs.

There the mob broke to pieces, becoming merely separate beasts that fought over a common booty. Wang Lung fought with the rest, although at no time did he see clearly for what he was fighting. Through his hands passed many things: cloth, glass, paper, wood. Once he caught the gleam of a bit of silver and laid hold on that, but, when it was snatched from him, forgot it to seize at something else. He stopped to look at nothing, seeing always in other hands an object more desirable.

His eyes burned and blurred with his beating blood, and like the others he yelled incessantly without knowing that he made any noise. He was possessed of a greed so great that it left room for nothing else in his mind. Whenever a fresh closet or fresh drawer was opened, a score of struggling men fell upon it, fighting, pulling, tearing. Though his arms were full of things, he dropped them all and pressed to seize on what was newly discovered.

And then, swiftly, like a gale passing on a summer's day, the crowd swept out. Since he had been among the first to come into the house, he was now among the last to leave. He found himself alone at the end, and, like a man who wakes from a sleep, he looked around him. The room was bare of everything except two broken chairs, a small table, and a chest of drawers with gaping holes where the drawers had been pulled out.

He came then to his right mind. What was he doing here? This was a foreigner's house. He looked at the chairs. They were of common wood. The table, too,

was of cheap wood and not of gold, as they had told him. The walls were whitewashed and bare, and the floor was of rough, painted wood.

For the first time he looked curiously at the things in his hands. They were a child's garment of white cotton cloth, a large leather shoe, two stiff-backed books, full of strange characters, and a small, worn purse containing a dollar and some copper money. There was nothing even remotely like the blue gown.

He sighed and felt all at once very tired, and then he knelt and packed everything securely in the garment and turned to go downstairs. He had come up those stairs quickly and easily, but now he found them difficult and strange, since he had never been on stairs before that day. He shifted his bundle and clung to a railing and went stiffly down. He was quite exhausted.

Downstairs there were still a few women, picking up articles that others had dropped in their haste. Wang Lung stopped, thinking he might see something of value. But there were only many books scattered about and one or two wooden chairs, another wooden table, a picture torn and trampled—nothing of any value anywhere. He saw a bit of grey cloth and stooped and, as he did so, caught sight of a little group in the inner room.

They were people such as he had never seen before—a man, a woman, two children, standing close together. Their clothes were torn and soiled and their upper clothes were entirely gone. The woman had drawn a piece of cloth about her shoulders. On the man's forehead was a cut, and a rill of blood was trickling down the side of his white face. Wang Lung had never seen blood so red.

He stared at them, and they looked steadfastly back at him in silence, even the children uttering no sound.

He found this gaze difficult to endure at last. He looked away and then back again, and the man said something in a strange tongue. The woman smiled a little bitterly, and they all continued to look at him with their shining, steady eyes.

'These people are not afraid!' Wang Lung said aloud, and then, hearing his own voice, he was suddenly ashamed and ran quickly out of the gate.

The streets were deserted, but in the distance he could hear the howling noise of the mob. After a moment's hesitancy, he turned and walked steadily towards his home. Still the dead soldiers lay on the road, and flies were beginning to gather from the hot sunshine. Country people were hurrying along towards the city. They asked Wang Lung many times what was taking place there, but he only shook his head. He was very tired of everything. He cared for nothing in the world.

When he reached home, he put his bundle on the table and said to his wife:

'There is my share of the Revolution.'

Then he went into the inner room and threw himself on the bed. He remembered nothing definitely except the strange clear gaze of those foreign eyes. 'They were really not afraid,' he muttered to himself. And then, turning over, he said, 'I do not believe they were even rich people.'

In the other room he heard his wife exclaiming: 'These books are fit for nothing but to make shoe soles, but at least this dollar will feed us until the turnips can be eaten.'

THE COMMUNIST

THE next morning at six o'clock she was to be killed. That was the only thing that stood out perfectly clear and perfectly certain in her mind after these dazed, wild months. Just as in the old days when she had sewed in the mission-school industrial class she had cut straight across a piece of new cloth, spoiling for ever its newness, so to-morrow morning would some one cut across her life, severing this mind of hers from these astonishing, scorching memories that were still hot in her heart. She had liked to cut across cloth that way. Even after the white stuff was all folded into a roll ready for to-morrow's sewing, she liked to pick up the bits of cloth on the table and floor and cut them across again and again until there was only a heap of worthless scraps left. There was never more than a small pile; the sharp-eyed sewing-teacher saw to that—a small, worthless pile such as she would be to-morrow after they had stood her up among the hundreds of others. Among them all she would scarcely be distinguished by anything—nothing to mark out her dead body from any other. No one would come to take it away—no one knew she was herded like this into a prison. She had not once during these ten months since the revolutionists entered the city thought of her parents—not, at least, for more than a moment of impatience at their unreality. They were dull, stupid people living in the established respectability of a well-to-do village homestead. Established? Nothing was established except this—that to-morrow at six o'clock she would be shot.

This had been the glory of these months—that everything was to be changed, everything destroyed, everything marvellously rebuilt. What a child she had been ten months ago, as she sat sewing in her boarding-school with the dull teachers walking to and fro between the desks—stupid American women who, when they spoke, marred the syllables of their words with their clumsy tongues. That was quickly over. In a day the school had been overturned. Everything had been overturned. The revolutionists had come marching down the streets, singing, drunken with their singing, but not with wine. Some spirit possessed them that had made the other girls, everybody, afraid of them. She was not afraid. She had bent from the window, looking at them, seeing the white sun upon the flags, the flags of the new world, and she had bent farther still and shouted, 'A thousand thousand years to the Revolution!' All their passionate faces had turned up to her at the sound of her voice, as leaves upon a tree are turned by a wind. Hundreds of faces had suddenly looked at her, and they were all alike, bronze with black eyes. All except that one. Why did she think of him? She would not—not when only these few hours remained to her.

They had come swinging into the school-yard, that stupid, dull yard where day after day she had moved her arms and marched unwillingly to the sharp command of a teacher's voice. 'Hold your head up, please. Siu-mei, hold your head up! Now then, breathe deeply—one, two, one, two.' All that was quickly done with when the revolutionists came marching in, glorifying for ever that barren bit of school-yard. They had come in shouting, and the foreigners had had to flee swiftly. Some of the girls had wept and hidden them in the fuel-

house. She would have nothing to do with that; she never saw them again. Let them go. She would not waste the few hours in remembering that long-nosed woman—what was the use of remembering her name even? All that was finished for ever.

Some of the girls had been afraid when the solid grey ranks came singing through the gates. That fat Meiling—how she had run screaming and trying to hide, and wedging her fat body into impossible corners! As if any man would desire her! But *she* had not been afraid. She had stood at the door and held it back, facing them gravely, and, when they swept in with their faces like hawk's faces and their eyes glittering, she had saluted and cried again: 'A thousand thousand years to the Revolution!' All those faces were alike to her, none more shining than another. Then that one man had come forward, throwing his arm roughly about her shoulders, that one who was like none of the others, with his ruddy skin and blue eyes, taller by head and shoulders than anybody she had ever seen.

'This one for me, comrades!' She had not dreamed that any foreigner could speak Chinese like that—scarcely a burr. She looked at him as if the heavens had opened suddenly above her, and he clapped her upon the back and laughed a splendid, lusty laugh that shook in his strong white throat.

Why should she think of this one, when to-morrow she would be dead? She had thought only of him from that instant—never of anything else. Let her try to remember now why she was to die and where she could get a little strength to die with.

He had not let her go all day, hurrying her everywhere in the circle of his arm, saying a dozen times in his great voice: 'Not afraid? Ah, that's a comrade

for me! I hate them running and screaming and hiding. Some one not afraid to come with me!' She had not said one word; she could not say one word. When she looked at him, there was no possibility of words. There was no fear at all—what did it matter what he did to her? He covered her under his blanket that night in a shadow of a gutted building when the men were exhausted with burning and looting, and their singing had mounted to a frenzy of shouting and screaming.

Dead people lay everywhere, men and women and children, their bodies flung about in any shape and order. At first they had killed only those who opposed them, but after that it became hard to distinguish and some of them began killing any one they saw. They were all mad at last—but not that one in whose arms she was held that day! He laughed a little all the time, his eyes glittering. He killed scarcely any one—once a fat, frightened merchant in a silk gown who ran trembling out of his house when the soldiers went in to loot. The old man had fallen just like a stuck pig, his jowls waxen and shaking after he had writhed an instant upon the cobble-stones. She had not been at all frightened, and he had drawn out his bayonet and wiped it clean on the merchant's delicate fawn-coloured gown. His blue eyes had smiled down on her, hard and clear as ice. 'All who are fat and overfed ought to die because they are hideous,' he said, laughing. 'Capitalists!' He said the word with a sort of lazy, amused hatred. She did not know what it was, that word, beyond having heard it sometimes in fragments of political speeches caught at street corners when the students were marching along two by two on their way to church, their Bibles folded in white handkerchiefs under their arms. Did she once do that? She pondered. Think of walking to church to

sing psalms! There were no churches any more. He had laughed at the churches that day, with the soldiers sprawling about the altars, gambling and disputing for loot, chopping up the pulpits for fuel to cook their food, and sleeping at night upon benches.

'Well, the churches are some use after all,' he had cried gaily when they saw the poor, the people who swarm through the hidden streets and by-ways searching for food, tearing at the windows and the floors and the high holy seats where the preachers had once sat in their robes, tearing them up for fuel to cook their food. when she told him that she once had sat there decorously, he said, 'And did you learn to be good, little thing?' She shook her head and said with that strange passion that ate at her always since she had been with him, 'I never learned anything until you came.'

Why did she keep thinking about him? The sun was creeping high in the heavens and sending a scanty beam into the window. All over the wretched room shapes of human beings took on life, stirring out of sleep, yawning, exposing yellow teeth, hawking, spitting, groaning. All of them would be dead when the sun was as high as this to-morrow. To-day she stood erect among them, clinging desperately to the bars of the window, catching a faint fragrance of new willow leaves and peach blossoms. To-morrow morning she could not stand if she would. Her body would lie helpless—was it possible there could at last be no feeling in this body of hers? Every nerve in it had been alive since that night when he had covered her with his blanket and drawn her to him.

'Do you like the Revolution?' he had said to her once in the night. 'Do you like the Revolution? Think what I have saved you from, little one. I'll

wager you were betrothed to some respectable country lad—those red cheeks of yours are from the country. He'd never love you as I have done.' He shook her gently and then fiercely. 'Answer me or I shall kiss you to death! We Communists have all sorts of ways of killing. Shall I kiss you to death? I could. I will, if you don't tell me you are glad I found you.'

She held her head against the bars. Why was she thinking of him? It was perfectly true that she had been betrothed all her life to a neighbour's son. They had played together in those far-off days when she had lived in the little village. When they were older, her parents had sent her away to school because it was not seemly for a maiden to be seen daily by her betrothed. She had not seen him for many years, but they told her, others—the old servant in her father's house told her, whispering and ogling—that he was a fine lad, filial and earnest in his study of the Confucian ethics. Ethics, Confucius—she knew nothing except that one time she had lain all night in a man's arms, her cheek against the bare white flesh of his shoulder.

'I do not even know your name. You do not know mine.'

He had laughed in the darkness. He laughed easily, that lusty, careless laugh.

'What does it matter, little thing? I am called Piotr the Communist, and my address is the world! But to-night my home is here with you, like this.'

'You will not leave me? Surely you will not!'

His laughter again. 'You brown-skinned little thing—even that does not matter.'

'It is all that matters to me now,' she whispered.

She waited, half-expecting to hear through the darkness the laughter welling up from his throat. She

wished that she could brush the darkness away and look at him again. It seemed to her that she had forgotten since darkness fell exactly how the lines of his ruddy face curved. There had been houses burning and and flames leaping up in the distance, and she wished that there were a house burning here that the light might be a lamp to her. But there were only ashes around them.

He did not laugh. He said with a sort of hurried seriousness :

'You might come with me. No, I do not stay anywhere—one can't take women along. You see, I have work to do in the world.'

'What work ?'

Now he was laughing. 'What, all day with me and you haven't seen my work—that fat merchant, these burning houses, you little freed thing ? All my work !'

She fell into silence, wondering with a dawning bitterness whether to-morrow he would free another girl and sleep with her all night. But his hands on her humbled her pride utterly. It did not matter. It was the Revolution. What came after the dawn broke was nothing, nothing. She pressed herself into his bosom ; she took his hand and buried her face in it, a big, rough, hot hand ; she was speechless because she had never known the words of love. She said she would not sleep —only lie like this. But before dawn she was exhausted and slept, and, when she woke, he was gone and the sun had come up as yellow as brass. She rose and looked about her at the ashes and broken bricks of what had yesterday been houses. A few people moved miserably about, searching for possessions. She held back her long, black hair wildly with one hand and stared at

them. They were none of them he. He was gone. She had never seen him again.

What did it matter that she was to die to-morrow? She had never seen him again.

She had searched for him everywhere among the ranks of the Communists, asking for him. 'I, too, am a Communist, comrades. I was converted by Piotr, the tall Russian. Have any of you seen him?'

But he was not to be found. They taught her the songs and the slogans, and she learned them because they were his songs. Sometimes they talked, and they said:

'We do not need these Russians. We Chinese, we must manage our own Revolution. That tall Russian now—even though he was a Communist, it was not seemly that he killed Chinese. We will do our own killing.'

Then there was a change in sentiment. People whose houses had been burned and kinsfolk killed, people who were against Communism, came into power again through one of the twists of the Revolution, and her comrades were swept in hordes to the prisons and to execution.

It was very easy to seize her. She had been proud of being a Communist. When her parents had sent from the village for her to come home to safety, she had bade the servant return, saying that she was safe—she was serving the Revolution. Her father even came at last, creeping secretly through the city gates by night, desperately frightened, knocking at the gate of the little inn where she was quartered with the other women Communists. She went to the gate and saw him there, his scanty white locks blowing in the wind and his jaw quivering with fright. He had at last fallen to his knees, this old man, before his daughter.

'Oh, my daughter, we fear for your life.'

'You need not. I am safe.'

'We are your parents.'

'I have no parents. The Revolution is my father and my mother.'

'But your betrothed, he who waits for you!'

'I am married already.'

'Married?' He was very old indeed, and the moonlight was amber-coloured on his wrinkled face.

'I am married to—to the Revolution!'

She had shut the gate then. She could never go back. One place on earth where she knew she could never meet Piotr was in that quiet village, wedded and shut behind walls.

Dawn came breaking in, a streak of silver. So had dawn broken for her once before. There were the guards coming now; they would get the killing over early before people began to stir. It did not matter about killing. The people had seen a great deal of it first and last—she herself—a dead body was nothing, part of the Revolution. A heavy-faced man rose, yawned, and glanced over the crowd. 'A hundred of us to be sent to the Yellow Springs this morning? Ah, well, I have taken care of as many in a good day!'

She, too, would be ready. But what should she do in memory of the hour before that other dawn? How celebrate on this her last day the moment in which she had lived?

They drove them all out and only she was left, standing against the wet brick wall. The guard pricked at her with his gun. 'Get on.'

She looked about her desperately. 'I will not.'

'What, you will not die?'

'I do not care for that. I will not be driven out

like these sheep. I wish to—to go to my death singing.'

'What—a Christian?' The guard smiled. He was enjoying her. He nudged his assistant. 'Pretty, isn't she!—Speak, then. What do you want? A bridal-chair? A car like the Governor's? Anything!'

She seized at the idea. Anything to be lifted out of that mass of stooping, frightened people. 'I demand a car. Look, I am weak. Yesterday I could not eat.'

'Well, I will see,' said the guard indulgently.

But in the end it had only been the police wagon drawn by heavy black oxen. She refused at first to climb upon it, but the guard was impatient. 'They will all be dead before we get there,' he cried, and then she climbed over the wheel.

Up over the edge of a black cloud shone the light of the coming sun. People were beginning to stand in their doorways, and, seeing the procession, they called to one another. 'They are killing the Communists! See, see, a killing! Ah, the killers killed at last!'

She stood swaying on the old ox-cart, clinging to the top. The oxen were sleek and stupid, and they made her think suddenly of her father's farm in the village and of the wet fields of black earth ready for the planting of the rice. Well, that was all ended. She heard some one say, 'See that one—what a young, pretty girl to die!' and suddenly her breath came short and she knew that she was very pitiable indeed. She looked down at her slender body in its blue-cotton coat and trousers. He had called her over and over, 'Little one, little thing.'

She began moaning softly. Was she going to weep? No, there was nothing sad, nothing pitiable. She was dying free. Piotr had freed her. Out of all these hundreds of people she alone had had that night which

was better than years in a courtyard. The sun showed a hard silver rim above the cloud, and she began to sing clearly a song of her own making, the words coming into her mouth as she spoke them. No one understood what she sang. If he himself had been there, he would not have understood. It was the song of one who has had an hour of life, an hour that has passed. The people listened. As she sang, she remembered, and her body straightened and her eyes grew luminous. But the people only murmured :

'See what a staunch Communist this little one is! Ah, but she must be a bad one! She goes to death singing!'

FATHER ANDREA

FATHER ANDREA lived all day for the hours at night when he might study the stars. The days in his parish in the Chinese city were long and crowded, filled with people and voices crying and complaining and demanding, and the nights were short and radiant with the silent, peaceful stars, shining like torches out of the dark purple sky. He could never get enough of them. The hours with his telescope went so quickly that many times he remembered to sleep only when the dawn came up out of the east with such ruddy splendour that the stars faded. But he did not need sleep. He could return to the day refreshed and braced by those hours of study and observation of the golden stars, when the voices that clamoured after him all day were asleep for a brief while. 'Bless sleep!' he would say to himself, chuckling as he climbed the steps to the tiny observatory he had built on top of the schoolhouse.

He was a small, stout, smiling man, whose exterior revealed nothing of his soft, mystic soul. If one saw only his apple cheeks and dark beard and red, smiling mouth, one would say that he was a lover of visible life. One needed to see his eyes to discover that he was a lover of things unseen. His lips went on smiling even when a leper came twisting and beseeching about his feet, or a wretched slave-girl ran in, cowering and crying, through the gates of the mission. But his eyes, deep-set and dark, were often full of tears.

During the day he lifted up the lepers with his hands and washed them and fed them and soothed them and smeared oil upon their wounds. He stood between the

slave-girl and her angry, cursing mistress, smiling, waiting, talking in that quiet, ceaseless, murmuring way he had. The woman's angry voice rose above it like a storm above a brook, but sooner or later his gentle, insistent speech won, and she would sit sulking, in answer to his invitation, in the seat of honour at the right of the square table in his little guest-hall, and sip the tea he had asked the servant to bring. And then, with his small, dark, tragic eyes grave above his smiling mouth, he would talk on, praising, suggesting, regretting, hinting gently of the necessity of better things, until in the end the slave went away with the mistress. He would never help people to break away from what held them fast. His great concern always was to help them bear more easily the inevitable yoke that life had placed upon each of them. That was the one thing he was sure of—that there was no getting away from the oppression that life itself brought.

Talking in the morning to the boys in his school, he said one day more earnestly than he had ever before said anything:

'My sons, I will tell you a thing. You think, when you are children, that you will break away from the bondage of your parents and that when you go to school you will be free of them. In school you dream of manhood, when there will be no more teachers for you to obey. But you can never be free! When your immortal souls took on flesh, they became even as the Son of Man was—bound. No man is free—we are not free of one another—we can never be free of God.

'The thing is, not to cry futilely after freedom, but to discover cheerfully how to bear the burden of bondage upon us. Even the stars in heaven are not free. They too must obey the paths of order in law, lest by their

wantonness they wreck the universe. You have seen the shooting stars in the sky in summer. They seem beautiful in freedom, a burst of light and splendour against the clouds. But their end is destruction and darkness. It is the stars marching steadily on in their appointed ways which endure to the end.'

The little blue-coated Chinese boys stared at him, wondering at the passion in his quiet voice and at the unwonted sombreness of his round, smiling face. They did not understand him at all.

All day long he trotted hither and thither about his duty, beginning at dawn by saying mass for a few faithful old women who came decently garbed in their cotton coats and trousers, with black kerchiefs folded about their heads. It troubled him sometimes that they did not grasp much of what he said; his Chinese had never been perfect, and it was spoken with a soft Italian elision that could never seize the gutturals firmly. But at last, seeing their patient faces as they fixed their eyes on the Virgin and her Son, he decided that it did not matter what he said so long as they looked at the sacred picture and struggled to think of its meaning.

Before noon he tried to teach a little in the boys' school, but it was a harried business, because at any moment he would be called without to settle some affair of the poor.

'Father, I sold this man tenpence of rice last night and trusted him until this morning for the money, and now, having eaten the rice, he tells me he has nothing.'

Two men in coolie trousers, their backs bare and blackened with the sun, stood before him, one angry, one defiant.

'Now, then, was not my stomach empty? Am I to starve when you have food? The revolutionists are

coming, and, when they come, all men like you who have rice must give to us who have not, and no talk of money, either!'

The two glared at each other as angry cocks will glare before attacking, and Father Andrea put a hand on each man's arm. His hands told the story begun by his eyes, small, brown, perfectly shaped hands that were broken and wrinkled with the washings and scrubbings he gave them. It was one of the agonies of his life that he could not subdue his flesh to the point of touching dark, unwashed bodies without some shrinking of his spirit. It was an obsession with him to wash his hands again and again, so that they were always scented faintly with carbolic soap. One of his private penances was to go without washing his hands, making himself endure the shuddering when he put them upon a child's head, crusted with the scald of disease. He had schooled himself to touch everything that made him recoil and, seeing his freely-moving, kindly, expressive hands, no one dreamed of the inner withdrawal.

So now, one of his hands warm and persuasive upon the arm of each man, he said to the defiant one:

'My friend, I know nothing of the revolutionists. But this I do know. My garden needs weeding to-day, and, if you will weed it, I will gladly pay you wages and, out of the wages, I who know your good heart am sure you will not withhold the tenpence to your neighbour. He is a poor man with children, and you have eaten his rice. It is written, "If any would not work, neither should he eat." It is one of the laws of life, which even the Revolution cannot rightly change.'

Instantly the tension on the two faces faded away, and the two men laughed and showed their white teeth, and Father Andrea laughed, wrinkling his round, rosy

face, and went back to his boys. At the end of the day he paid the man double wages. 'Take it,' he said when the man made a feint of refusal. 'Some day I will ask you to work for me again, and on that day I may not have the money by me.'

In the afternoon, after his dish of rice and beans and macaroni, he put on his flat black hat and went out and visited the people and drank tea with them and ate the hard-boiled eggs the housewives would cook for him, although his soul loathed them, and listened, smiling, to all that was said. He knew no rich people. These scorned him as a Catholic priest and a foreigner, and he would not have forced his presence upon them even if he could. He went into the low, thatched houses of the poor and into the mat sheds of beggars, and he gave them his money as fast as it came into his hands. Of the great storm gathering without, the storm of the Revolution, these people knew nothing, and no more did Father Andrea know. He had read no newspapers for years, and he had no idea of anything that was happening beyond this round of days and splendid nights.

Once a week he allowed himself to remember his own country. On the evening of the seventh day he washed himself and trimmed his dark beard and put a little scent upon his hands, and then he went up into the tiny observatory and sat in an old easy-chair he had there. On the other nights he sat upon a stool by the table and took out his pens and papers and his measuring instruments and in his small, accurate handwriting he made notes which he sent to his Superior in Siccawei. Through all these years of evenings he had gradually become one of the chief of a group of astronomers in the Far East, although he did not know it. To him his study of the heavens was the relaxation and exhilaration of a brain

formed for meticulous observation and keen, hard thinking.

But on this seventh day he took no paper and pens. He sat down and opened the windows and fixed his eyes upon the stars and allowed his thoughts to take him back to Italy, his country, to which he had not returned for twenty-seven years and which he would never behold again. He had been a young man when he left, scarcely thirty, but even after all these years he remembered with passionate sharpness the agony of that parting. Even yet he could see the bay, rounding into a circle smaller and smaller as the ship drew out from the land. Every week he thought gravely and with a sense of guilt that above his sense of mission still was the memory of that parting, and that sharper than the parting of his body from his motherland, from his home and parents and his sister and his brother, was the parting of his spirit from his beloved, his Vitellia, who had loved his brother more than him.

He had done penance all these years for this sin, that he had come into the Church, not for devotion to God and Mary, but because Vitellia did not love him. Not that she or any one else knew it. His brother was tall and handsome and grave, with beautiful, languishing brown eyes, and Vitellia was tall and pale and exquisite as an olive-tree in new leafage, her colours all soft and subdued and mist-like. She was head and shoulders above the little rosy man he always was. No one thought of him seriously. He was always laughing and joking and merry, his small, deep-set, black eyes crackling with humour.

Even after his brother's marriage he did not stop his joking. But he waited to see whether or not his brother was good to Vitellia. There was nothing to complain of

there. His brother was a good man, although a little dull inside his beauty of body, and, when he found himself married and soon with a child coming, he settled down into his father's wine business and they were very happy. No, there was nothing to complain of there.

Then it was that Andrea became frightened at the power of his passion. He saw that nothing would keep him from revealing himself except entire submission to his fate. That took a year of fever and agony, and it was not complete until he saw that for him there was no renunciation wholly efficacious except priesthood in some far country. Then he fled to the fathers in his village.

His family had laughed at him—every one laughed at him—and Vitellia had nearly ruined him by clinging to his hand and saying in that voice of hers that was more to him than music, 'But brother mine, my Andrea, who will play with my children and be always in my house?' He had shaken his head, smiling and speechless, and she had looked at him in surprise and seen that his eyes were full of tears. 'Must you, if you mind so much, Andrea?' And he had nodded.

Ah, well, it was all done, long, long ago. For many years he had not allowed himself to think of her because she was another man's wife, and he had come to the stars night after night and prayed passionately for peace. It seemed to him that he could never do penance enough for loving Vitellia more than any one else, always to the very end. That made him deny himself fiercely and force himself to every distasteful touch and duty. Once, when his flesh had burned after her, he had gone wildly out into the streets and had brought in a beggar from the winter's night, a poor, shivering wretch, and had

lain him in his bed and covered him with his blankets and had stretched himself out beside the creature all night long, his teeth clenched and his stomach sick. But in the morning he whispered triumphantly to his body, 'Now will you be quiet and cease troubling me!' All this explained the smiling tragedy in his eyes and his constant preaching of bearing one's yoke.

When one day a black-bordered letter came, the first letter in many years, he opened it, and within was the news of Vitellia's death. Then it seemed that peace of a sort came upon him, and after a while he allowed himself this relaxation on the evening of seventh days and even at last permitted himself to think a little of her. Now that she was dead, he could imagine her up yonder, moving in that free, light way she had, among the stars. She was no one's wife now—she belonged to no one. She was a part of heaven, and he could think of her as of a star and be without sin.

He began to preach less vehemently and more patiently about bearing the yoke. When one of his schoolboys ran away to join the revolutionists, he went out with a sigh and sought him and talked with him gently, begging him to come back to his weeping mother.

'The good God puts us into life with a duty to perform,' he said tenderly, smiling a little, with his arm about the boy's shoulders.

But the boy shook himself free and moved away.

'In the Revolution there is no God and there is no duty,' he said imperiously. 'We are all free, and we preach a gospel of freedom for every one.'

'Ah?' said Father Andrea softly.

For the first time a premonition fell upon him. He had up to this time paid no attention to the talk of revolution. His paths had not led him a mile from the

congested quarter where he lived. It occurred to him that now he must look into such talk, especially if his boys were going off like this. He began to speak then of other things, but the boy was wary and obviously eager to have him gone. There were other lads about, and an officer or two. The boys' answers grew shorter and shorter. He cast angry looks at his fellows. At last Father Andrea said kindly :

'I see that you have other things on your mind. I will leave you now. Do not forget the prayers that you have been taught, my child.'

He put his hand on the lad's head for an instant and turned away, but, before he left the barracks, a hoot of laughter arose, and he heard the lads shouting to their comrade, 'Running-dog of a foreigner, are you ?'

He had no idea what this meant, and he thought once of going back. He stopped to listen. Some one cried out, laughing like a whip's cut, 'Ah, a Christian !'

Then he heard the boy's voice raised angrily, half-sobbing : 'I hate the priest—I know nothing of his religion. I am a revolutionist ! Does any one dare to question me ?'

Father Andrea stood stricken. What words were these to come from his lad's mouth, his lad who had been in his school ever since he was five years old ? He trembled a little, and a thought shot into his mind like a pang. 'So did Peter deny his Lord !' And he went back into the little mission that was his home and shut himself up in his room and wept bitterly.

After that it seemed to him that he had been standing on the edge of a whirlpool and had not known it. He had said that he must investigate this Revolution and see that his boys were not carried away. But there was no need of investigation. Knowledge and experience

came pouring over him, and he was caught in a maze of difficulties.

There was so much he had not known. He had never heard of political differences between East and West. He had come only as one who wished to bury himself in his mission to a land where there was not his true Church. In this one spot in an immense, crowded city he had lived day after day for twenty-seven years, and his small, black-robed figure had become as much a part of the street as an ancient temple or bridge. Children, as long as they could remember, were accustomed to the sight of him, trudging along in all weathers, his pockets bulging ridiculously with pea-nuts for them. No one thought of him. Woman washing at the well looked up as he came by, knew that it must be an hour after noon and sighed to think of the hours before sunset. Men nodded at him carelessly from the counters of the little shops open to the streets and accepted with good humour his tracts and pictures of the Virgin.

Now this was changed. He was no longer Father Andrea, a harmless, ageing priest. He became instead a foreigner.

One day a child refused to take the pea-nuts he held out to it. 'My mother says they may be poisoned,' the child said, looking up at Father Andrea with wide eyes.

'Poisoned?' said Father Andrea vaguely and in great surprise.

The next day he returned with his pockets as heavy as when he started, and after that he took no more pea-nuts. Once a woman spat after him as he passed the well. Then men shook their heads coldly when he smiled and proffered his tracts. He was completely bewildered.

At last one night his native assistant came to him. He was a good old man with a straggling, scanty white

beard, honest and a little stupid, so that he never quite got his Aves right. Father Andrea had wondered sometimes if he should not find some one more able, but he could never bring himself to tell the old man that he was not perfect. Now he said to Father Andrea:

'My Father, do not go out until this madness is past.'

'What madness?' asked Father Andrea.

'This talk about foreigners and revolutions. The people are listening to these young men in long black gowns who come from the South, and they say that the foreigners are killing the people and stealing their hearts with new religions.'

'New religions?' said Father Andrea mildly. 'There is nothing new about mine. I have been here preaching and teaching for more than a quarter of a century.'

'Even so, sir, you are a foreigner,' replied the old man apologetically.

'Well,' said Father Andrea at last, 'this astonishes me very much!'

But he listened to the old man after the next day; for, when he stepped from the gate into the street, a great stone flung at him flew against his breast and broke into two pieces the ebony cross that hung there, and, when he put up his hand, aghast, another stone flew against him and cut his hand badly. He turned white and went into the mission house and shut the door and fell upon his knees and looked at the broken cross. For a long time he could say nothing, but at last words came to his lips and he prayed an old prayer: 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'

After that he stayed in the compound. Within a few days no one came any more, and he locked the door of the empty schoolroom sadly. It was as if he were in the

quiet centre of a storm. From outside the lonely compound where he and his old assistant pottered about the garden, strange sounds rose up in confusion from the streets. He locked the gate, opening it only once a day in the evening for the old man to creep out and buy a little food. At last one day the old man came back with his basket empty.

'They will not let me buy food for you,' he said piteously. 'To save your life I must pretend to leave you, and I must pretend to hate you. But every night I will throw food over the western corner of the garden. And every evening at the hour I will repeat the Ave. Our God must look after you beyond this.'

Thereafter Father Andrea was quite alone. He spent a great deal of time in the observatory, and he allowed himself to think and remember every evening now. The days were long and solitary, and he missed even the lepers. There was no more need to wash his hands except of the clean garden earth that clung to them after he had been working among the vegetables. And, outside, the noise rose and mounted until he fancied that he was on some small island in the midst of a raging sea, and that one day the waves would break over him even there.

He withdrew into his thoughts more and more, and he built little dreams of Italy and of the grape-garden where he had played as a boy. He could smell the hot sun on the ripe grapes—incomparable fragrance! Sitting in the old easy-chair night after night, he began to reconstruct from the beginning his life. It was May, and the stars were brilliant in a purple sky. But he no longer touched his note-books and pens. He had become indifferent to anything of the stars except their sheer unearthly beauty. Thank God for stars and sky

everywhere! These Chinese skies in May were like the skies of Italy in summer, the stars hanging heavy and golden in the dark sky. Once on a night like this in Italy he had leaned from his window and gone suddenly mad with the beauty of the stars, and he had run blindly out of the house to Vitellia. His heart was beating like a great drum, shaking his body with every throb, and he had cried that he must tell her that he loved her. When he had got to his brother's house, his brother had opened the door and said kindly:

'We were just about to sleep, Andrea. Is there anything we can do for you?'

Behind his brother he saw Vitellia, shadowy in the room, her face pale and indistinct as a flower in the twilight. She came forward and rested her hand lightly upon her husband's arm and leaned her head upon his shoulder. She was quite content. Passion went out of him.

"No, thank you," he stammered. 'I thought—I did not know it was so late—I thought I might come in and talk a little while, perhaps.'

'Yes, another day,' said his brother gravely.

And Vitellia had called: 'Good night, brother Andrea!' And the door shut, and he was alone.

That was the night he had stayed in the garden the whole night through, and at dawn he had said at last that he would give himself to the poor, since Vitellia did not need him—the poor of a far country.

Ah, all that passion and pain and the youth he had had to wear down by sheer indomitable will to suffer! He would still never be free of it—never, so long as he lived, quite free. He wondered if there among the stars Vitellia knew—there where surely everything was known. He hoped so. That would mean

that he need not tell her of all the pain. She would understand as she had never understood on earth, and they could start in at once on the new heavenly relationship.

He sighed and went down into the garden then, and there at the western end he found a small bundle of cold rice and meat wrapped in a lotus leaf, and he ate it and then said his Aves, his fingers hovering over the broken cross on his breast.

From outside the wall, in the street, there came the sound of steady, marching feet, thousands upon thousands of feet. He listened a while, wondering, and then, with a sigh, he went up again to his observatory and sat down, and, looking off into the clear spaces of heaven, he slept lightly.

In the morning he awoke with a start of premonition, as if he had been aroused suddenly by a noise. He could not for an instant collect himself. The stars were weak in the grey light of the dawn, and the roof of the church was dark and wet with dew. From without there came a sound of mad confusion, and shooting and shouts rent the air. He listened. There were several shots in quick succession. He sat up, trying to think what this could be. Was this what had waked him? There was no more marching. A huge blaze lighted up the distant eastern sky. Something was burning—that was the rich quarter of the city, where the streets were hung with the scarlet and yellow banners of the big grain-shops and silk-shops and sing-song houses. But it might be only the sun rising? No, there was no such splendour of sunrise out of this grey sky.

He dragged himself from the chair and went downstairs heavily, with vague alarm. He had not slept restfully, and his mind felt fogged. As he reached the foot

of the steps and stood upon the grass, there came a terrific pounding at the gate, and he moved quickly to open it, rubbing his head a little to collect his thoughts. This was the noise he had heard in his sleep! He fumbled at the great wooden bar and withdrew it at last and opened the gate and stared out in amazement. Hundreds of men stood there in a mass—soldiers in grey uniform. Their faces were ferocious as he had not dreamed human faces could be, and he shrank from them as he had never shrunk from his lepers. They levelled their guns at him then with a tigerish shout. He was not afraid, only completely amazed.

'But what do you want, my friends?' he asked in surprise.

A young man, scarcely older than his schoolboy who had run away, stepped forward and tore the rosary from about his neck. The fragment of broken cross, all that was left of the cross he had worn for so many years, fell to the ground.

'We have come to rid the world of imperialists and capitalists!' the young man shouted.

'Imperialists and capitalists?' said Father Andrea, wondering. They were words he had never heard. It had been many years since he had read anything except the ancient Church fathers and his books of astronomy. He did not have the faintest idea what the lad meant.

But the boy cocked his gun and pointed it at Father Andrea. 'We are the revolutionists!' he cried. His voice was rough and harsh as if he had been shouting for many hours, and his smooth, youthful face was blotched and red as if with drinking. 'We come to set every one free!'

'Set every one free?' said Father Andrea slowly,

smiling a little. He stooped to pick up his cross from the dust.

But before his hand could touch that cross, the boy's finger moved spasmodically upon the trigger and there was a sharp report, and Father Andrea fell upon the ground, dead.

THE NEW ROAD

LU CHEN kept a hot-water shop on the corner of the street of the North Gate, where the alley of the Hwang family intersects it. As every one knows, that was one of the chief places in the whole length of that street. Not only did the silk-shops fling out their banners of orange silk, but down the alley of the Hwangs lived other great families. A score of times a day the clerks idling about the dim shops sent the tea-coolie for pots of scalding water to brew the tea that they sipped the whole day through. A score of times a day the ladies of the alley, gambling delicately as a pastime in one another's houses, sent their slaves to get water from Lu Chen. It was a thriving business and had been a thriving business even in his grandfather's time, when an emperor had lived but a few miles away and that very street had ended in a prince's pleasure-grounds.

From his father Lu Chen had received the shop, together with a rice-sack full of silver dollars. The rice-sack had been emptied to pay for his wedding, but gradually it had been filled again to pay for the schooling and then the wedding of his son. Now, after this last emptying, it was a fifth full again, and Lu Chen's grandchild ran about the shop, terrifying the old man with his venturesome spirit and his curiosity regarding the great copper cauldrons built into the earthen ovens.

'When I was a child,' Lu Chen proclaimed at least daily to his small grandson, 'I never ran near the cauldrons. I obeyed my grandfather, and did not eternally run about like a small chicken.'

Of this the grandson understood nothing. He was as yet too young to speak clearly, but he was able to understand that he was the centre of his grandfather's heart, and he continued to stagger about near the ovens under the old man's agitated eye. He had become accustomed, of course, to being lifted suddenly by the collar of his small coat, and to dangling in the air while his grandfather set him in the inner room.

'I cannot understand this child of yours,' remarked Lu Chen to his tall young son. 'When will you teach him obedience?'

Lu Chen's son, who had been inclined to idleness and discontent ever since finishing his fourth year at the Government middle school, shrugged his shoulders in reply, and said half-petulantly, 'We do not so worship obedience these days.'

Lu Chen glanced at him sharply. He would never acknowledge that his son was at all idle. Even at night, when he lay within the curtains of his bamboo bed beside his wife, he would not acknowledge it.

Sometimes she said: 'The boy has not enough to do. The shop is small, and there is really only one man's work. If you would only rest now—are you not fifty years old?—and allow our son to manage the business, it would be better. He is twenty years old, and he feels no responsibility for his rice or for the rice of his wife and the child. You do everything. Why did you send him to school if he is to be idle?'

Lu Chen threw back the thick blue cotton-stuffed quilt. This talk of giving up his work in the shop always stifled him. The real reason why he had allowed his son to continue in school year after year was that he might have the shop to himself.

'That bigger cauldron,' he muttered, 'is never so

bright as I could wish. I have said to him a dozen times, "Take the ash from the oven and wet it a little and smear it upon the copper and, when it is dried ——", but he never will do it.'

'Because you are never satisfied when he does,' said his wife. She was a large, stout-bodied woman; Lu Chen's small, dried figure scarcely lifted the quilt at all in comparison with the mound of her flesh beneath it.

'He will not do it as I command him,' he said in a loud voice.

'You are never satisfied,' she replied calmly.

This calmness of hers irritated him more than any anger. He sat upright and stared down at her placid face. Through the coarse linen curtains the light of the bean-oil lamp shone with a vague flicker; he could see her drowsy eyes and her full, expressionless lips.

'I do as my father taught me,' he said shrilly.

'Ah, well,' she murmured. 'Let us sleep. What does it matter?'

He panted a moment and lay down.

'You care nothing for the shop,' he said at last. It was the gravest accusation he could think of.

But she did not answer. She was asleep and her loud, tranquil breathing filled the recesses of the curtains.

The next morning he rose very early and himself scoured the inside of the two cauldrons until they reflected his lean brown face. He would have liked to have let them remain empty until his son awoke, and so show him how they could be made to look. But he dared not, since the slaves and servants came early for hot water for their mistresses' baths. He filled the cauldrons, therefore, with water from the earthen jars

and lighted the fires beneath them. Soon the steam was bubbling up from under the water-soaked wooden covers. He had filled and refilled the cauldrons three times before his son sauntered in, rubbing his eyes, his blue cotton gown half buttoned around him and his hair on end. Lu Chen gave him a sharp look.

'When I was young,' he said, 'I rose early and scoured the cauldrons and lighted the fires beneath them, and my father slept.'

'These are the days of the Revolution,' said the young man, lightly. Lu Cheng snorted and spat upon the ground.

'These are the days of disobedient sons and of idle young men,' he said. 'What will your son be, seeing that you do not yet earn your rice?'

But the young man only smiled and, buttoning his coat slowly, went to the cauldron nearest him and dipped into a basin water wherewith to wash.

Lu Chen watched him, his face quivering. 'It is only for you that I value the shop,' he said at last. 'It is that the business may go to you and the child after you. This hot-water shop has stood here sixty years. It is well known. All my father's life and my life and your life have come from it—and now the child's.'

'There is talk of the new road now,' said the young man, wringing a steaming cloth from the water and wiping his face.

That was the first time Lu Chen heard of the new road. It meant nothing to him then. His son was always away, always full of talk of new things, ever since the Revolution had come into the city. What the Revolution was Lu Chen did not clearly perceive. There had certainly been days when his business was very poor and when the great shops had been closed for

fear of looting and when the families he regularly supplied had moved away to Shanghai. His business then had been reduced to the petty filling of tin tea-kettles for the poorer people, who haggled over a copper penny. People said it was the Revolution, and he had become anxious and cursed it in his heart. Then suddenly soldiers were everywhere, and they bought water most recklessly. That was when he began filling up the rice-sack again. That was the Revolution, too. He was mightily puzzled, but he no longer cursed it. Then the great shops re-opened and the old families came back and soldiers drifted away again and things were much as they had been except that prices were high, so that he could raise the price of water too, and was relieved.

'These revolutions,' he said to his son one morning, 'what are they about? You have been to school—do you know? It has been a great stir. I am glad it is over.'

At that the son raised his eyebrows. 'Over?' he repeated. 'It is only begun. Wait. This city will be the capital of the country, and then everything will be greatly changed.'

The old man shook his head. 'Change? There is never great change. Emperors and kings and presidents or whatnot, people must drink tea and must bathe—these go on for ever.'

Well, but this new road? On the very day his son had mentioned it, that impudent young slave-girl from the third alley down had turned up the corner of her lip at him and said:

'I hear talk from our master of a great new road, sixty feet wide. What then of your cauldrons, Lu Chen?'

Lu Chen's arm was bare to the elbow and wrinkled

and reddened by the continued steam from the water. He scarcely felt the heat. But now, as the slave-girl spoke, he dipped his bamboo dipper more deeply into the water and grunted. His hand trembled and slopped a little water over the edge of the cauldron into the hot coals of the fire. A hiss rose from them. He did not speak but made a pretence of stirring up the fire. He was not going to speak to that silly creature. Yet, after she had gone, he remembered that she was a slave in the house of Ling and that, since the eldest son of Ling was an official, there might indeed be talk of the road. He gazed about on the grey brick walls of his little shop in a sort of terror. They were darkened with smoke and dampness and had cracks that he could remember even from childhood. Sixty feet wide? Why, it would mean the whole shop ripped away!

'I will ask such a price that they cannot buy it,' he thought. 'Such a price——' He cast about in himself for a sum enormous enough to stagger a government. 'I will ask ten thousand dollars!'

He was happy then. Who would pay ten thousand dollars for this twelve square feet of space and the two cauldrons? Where was so much money in the world? Why, when his father had been a young man, the Prince Ming-yuan had built a palace for that. He laughed a little and was more lenient with his son and forgot the new road and daily preserved the life of the child from the cauldrons. Everything was as before.

One morning midway to noon, he sat down to rest and drink a little tea. He always brewed his own tea after the fifth emptying of the cauldrons, just before he began to fill them again for the noon call. In this interval, when people had bought for the morning tea and the hour had not yet approached for the midday meal, he

could enjoy a little leisure. He took the grandchild on his knee and let him drink also, and smiled to see him grasp the bowl in two hands and drink, staring gravely over the rim.

All at once there was a sharp rap like a sword-cut at the door. Lu Chen set the child down carefully and moved the teapot out of his reach. Then he went to the door and, fumbling a little, drew back the wooden bar. A man stood there in a grey cotton uniform. He was a young officer of some sort, with an arrogant eye, but he scarcely looked at Lu Chen.

'Sir,' said Lu Chen a little timidly, since the young officer carried a gun and a belt stuffed with cartridges. But he was interrupted.

'The new road passes your shop. What is your name, old man?' The officer rapidly consulted a sheet of paper drawn from his pocket. 'Ah, yes, Lu! Thirty feet off your house. Fifteen days from to-day your shop must be gone. Else we will tear it down for you.' He folded the paper carelessly and put it back into his pocket. Then he turned to go away. At his heels were three common soldiers, and they turned also and fell into step. Lu Chen could not speak. He swallowed, but his throat was dry. No sound came forth. One of the soldiers glanced back at him, a curious, pitying glance. That pity suddenly released the knot in Lu Chen's throat.

'Ten thousand dollars!' he called hoarsely after the young officer.

The officer halted instantly and wheeled about.

'What is that?' he said sharply.

'The price of the shop is ten thousand dollars,' faltered Lu Chen.

The young officer grasped his gun, and Lu Chen

shrank in alarm behind the door and closed it. But the young man would not have it. He walked back and thrust his gun so suddenly against the door that Lu Chen staggered and bumped into the child, who began to cry. Every time in the child's whole life that he had cried, Lu Chen had rushed to him. But now he did not even hear. He was gazing fixedly at the young officer, murmuring over and over, unconsciously, 'Ten thousand dollars, ten thousand dollars.'

The officer stared at him and then broke into a chilly laughter. 'It is your contribution, then, to the new capital,' he said, and, shouting a sharp command, he went away.

Contribution? What contribution? The child lay on the earthen floor, wailing. He was used to lying wherever he had fallen, since some one always picked him up, but now no one came. Lu Chen stood looking out through the door after the young man's figure. His heart lagged in his body so that he could scarcely draw his breath. Give up his shop, his life? What was all this talk of a new capital? It was none of his business. He turned and, seeing the child, dazedly picked him up and put him on his feet. Then, with the child in his arms, he sat down. Why, the shop was the child's! No one could take it away. Anger rose up in him and relieved him then, since it drove out his fear. He never would give up the shop—never! He would sit there in it until they tore the last tile from over his head. He set the child on the floor again and bustled mightily and filled the cauldron and started roaring fires, so that within the hour the water bubbled and steamed and lifted the wooden covers. He was very sharp with his customers, and, when the impudent slave-girl came with her cheeks pink and her black eyes saucy, he skimped

her a little on water and would not fill the kettle for all her scolding.

'It will be a good thing for us all when the new road comes and takes away your shop, old robber,' she flung at him when she saw that he would give her no more.

'Nothing can be taken from me,' he shouted after her, and, when her mocking laugh came back to him, he shouted again, 'That for the new road!' And he spat.

After a while the door opened and his son came in.

'What of the new road?' he asked indolently, feeling the teapot to see whether it was still hot.

'Now then,' said Lu Chen, 'you still return for your food, do you? Where have you been to-day?'

'But it is true of the new road,' said the boy, sipping the half-cold tea from the spout of the pot. 'Quite true. It comes straight past us. The shop—"thirty feet off"—will leave but half of the two bedrooms at the back.'

Lu Chen stared unbelievingly. He was all at once so angry that his eyes grew dim. He raised his hand and knocked the teapot from his son's hand, and it fell upon the ground and broke into three pieces.

'You stand there,' Lu Chen muttered thickly, 'you stand there and drink tea——' and, seeing the young man's astonished face, he began to weep and walked as fast as he could into the room where he slept, and crawled into the bed and drew the curtains.

In the morning, when he rose, he was still angry with his son. When the young man ate his rice, innocently, Lu Chen twitched his eyebrows and muttered: 'Yes, you eat and your son eats, but you do not think where the money is to come from.' But for all of this he did not believe that they would really take away his shop, and he went on about his work as before.

The eleventh day after he was warned by the officer, his wife came to him with unwonted consternation on her face. 'It is true that the road is coming,' she said. 'If you look up the street, you will see a sight. What shall we do?' She began to weep softly, her large face scarcely disturbed.

Lu Chen, seeing her, felt himself quivering. He went to the door and gazed up the street. Always the street had been so narrow, so winding, so darkened with the overhanging shop-signs of varnished wood and coloured silk, that one could see for only a few feet. But now there was the strange light of the sun shining upon the damp cobbles. A score of feet away all the signs were gone, and men were tearing down houses. Heaps of age-stained bricks and tiles lay on the street, and caravans of donkeys with baskets across their backs stood waiting to carry them away. The same officer that he had seen was walking about, and behind him followed four angry women, their hair streaming down their backs. They were cursing and wailing, and Lu could hear them say:

'We have no life left, no life left—our homes are gone!'

Lu went into the shop then and shut the door and barred it. He sat down on the short wooden bench behind the cauldron, his knees shaking, his mind in a maze. Inexorably the road was coming. The child ran out of the inner room and leaned against his knee, but Lu beheld him apathetically. The child, seeing his remote gaze, looked roguishly up and touched the great cauldron with a tentative finger. But Lu, for the first time in his life, did not cry out at him. A dim thought went through his mind. 'Burned? It is nothing. You will starve at last.'

There was a thunderous knock at the door at that moment, and Lu's heart leaped. With his whole body taut, he went to remove the bar. It was the officer in a very clean new uniform, and behind him stood the three soldiers. No one could dream from their appearance that they had been bitterly cursed but a few moments ago, so sure and confident did they seem. Lu, looking at them, suddenly felt that he was a very old man and that it was best for him to die.

'Four days,' said the officer, 'and your shop must be gone. Tear it down yourself, and you will have the materials. Otherwise we will confiscate it.'

'But the money?' faltered Lu Chen.

'Money?' repeated the officer sharply, tapping his shining leather boot with a small stick he carried.

'The price is ten thousand dollars,' said Lu Chen a little more firmly, gathering himself together.

The officer gave a sharp, short laugh.

'There is no money,' he replied, each word as clear and cold as steel. 'You are presenting this to the Republic.' Lu Chen looked wildly about. Surely there was some redress. Surely some one would help him.

He began to scream out in a broken, shrill voice to the passers on the street. 'Do you see this, sirs? I am to be robbed—robbed by the Republic! Who is this Republic? Will it give me food, and my wife and my child——'

He felt himself twitched slightly by the coat. The soldier who had looked back at him the other day whispered hurriedly:

'Do not anger the officer—it will be worse.' Aloud he said: 'Do not complain, old man! In any case your shop would have to go. In the new day that is coming we shall not want hot-water shops. Hot water will come pouring forth from the self-going pipes.'

Lu Chen would have answered him, but was at that moment pulled backward by his son, who stood there in front of him, facing the officer. The young man spoke anxiously, courteously:

'Sir, forgive an old man who cannot understand that the Revolution has come and brought new light. I will answer for him. We will pull down the house, sir. It is an honour for us to sacrifice all we have to the country.'

The red anger that had been rising over the officer's face faded: he gave a short nod and walked quickly away.

The young man barred the door against the curious, half-pitying crowd that had gathered to see the scene. Then he stood against the door and faced Lu Chen. Lu Chen had never seen him thus, firm and decided.

'Shall we all be killed then?' he demanded. 'Are we to die for the sake of a shop?'

'In any case we shall starve,' said Lu Chen, seating himself on the other side of the table, opposite his wife. She had continued to weep the whole time, without noise or disturbance, merely wiping the large tears from her cheeks with the corner of her blue jacket.

'I have found work,' said his son. 'I am to be an overseer of workmen on the new road.'

Lu Chen looked up at him, then, without any hope in his heart.

'Even you, my son?' he whispered.

The young man pushed back his hair restlessly from his forehead.

'Father, there is no use in fighting against it. It will come. Think of it, a great new road sweeping through our city! Automobiles, passing to and fro! Once at school I saw a picture of a street in a foreign city—big

shops and automobiles rushing back and forth. Only *we* have wheelbarrows and rickshaws and donkeys crowding against one another in the streets. Why, these streets were made a thousand years ago. Are we never to have new ones ? '

' What is the use of automobiles ? ' muttered Lu Chen. He had seen them often in these past weeks, crowding, pushing, insistent, making people rush to doorways and side-alleys. He hated them. ' Our ancestors——' he began.

But the young man snapped his fingers. ' That for them ! ' he cried. ' I shall get fifty dollars a month from the new road.'

Fifty dollars a month ? Lu Chen was stunned. He had never seen such an amount of money. He was diverted a little, and his wife stopped crying.

' Where will so much come from ? ' he asked, half-fearfully.

' The new Government has promised it,' replied his son in a complacent tone.

' I shall buy myself a new black sateen coat,' the young man's mother said, a light beginning to break over her face. And then, after an interval during which she thought about the coat, she gave a rumbling, hoarse laugh.

But to Lu Chen, when he had pondered the matter, it seemed that there was no hope for his shop, now that it was no longer their only means of support. He sat all day without lighting the fire, and the great cauldrons for the first time in threescore years were cold.

When people came to buy water, he said :

' There is no more need. You are to have pipes. Until then heat your own water.'

The saucy slave-girl stuck out her tongue at him, a

small, red tongue, as red as a cherry, but he shook his head at her without anger or interest.

The next day his son asked :

' Shall we not call the masons to tear down the house, lest we lose everything ? '

That roused him a little. ' No,' he cried. ' Since they will rob me, let them rob me utterly.' And for four days he sat in his house, refusing to eat, refusing even to open his door, although he heard approaching nearer and nearer the destruction—the crash of falling bricks, the groaning of timbers placed centuries ago and now lowered to the ground, the weeping of many people like himself, whose homes were thus demolished.

On the morning of the fifteenth day there was a great knock upon his door. He rose at once to open it. There stood a dozen men, armed with picks and axes. He faced them. ' You come to destroy my shop ? I am helpless. Here it is.' And he sat down again upon his bench while they crowded in. There was not one touch of sympathy in their faces. In this fashion they had already destroyed hundreds of shops and homes ; and to them, he saw very clearly, he was only an old man, and one more troublesome than others.

His wife and his son and his son's wife and child had gone away that morning to a friend's house, and they had taken with them everything except the bench whereon Lu Chen sat and the two cauldrons. His son had said : ' Come with me, father. I have prepared a place—I have rented a little house. They advanced me some money on the first month.' But Lu Chen had shaken his head stubbornly and sat still as they went out.

There were the great copper cauldrons, firmly

embedded in the clay of the ovens. Two workmen hacked at them with pickaxes.

'My grandfather put those in,' he said suddenly. 'There are no such workmen nowadays.'

But he said nothing more while they took the tiles from the roof and the light began to seep down between the rafters. At last they took the rafters, and he sat there within four walls with the noonday sunshine beating on him. He was sick and faint, but he sat on through the long afternoon, and, when evening came, he still sat there, his shop a heap of bricks and tiles and broken rafters about him. The two cauldrons stood up naked out of the ruins. People stared at him curiously but said nothing, and he sat on.

At last, when it was almost dark, his son came and took him by the hand. 'The child will not eat because you have not come, father,' he said kindly, and then Lu Chen rose, like a very old man, and, holding his son's hand, went with him.

They made their dwelling, then, in a little thatched house just inside the North Gate, where there are fields and empty lands. Lu Chen, who all his life had lived in the bustle of the streets, could not endure the silence. He could not bear to look out across the blankness of the fields. He sat all day in the little bedroom that belonged to him and his wife, scarcely thinking. Since there was no need for him to work any more, he became very soon an old, old man. His son brought home at the end of the month fifty round silver dollars and showed them exultantly.

'It is more than the shop ever yielded,' he cried. He was no longer indolent and careless, and he wore a clean grey uniform buttoned neatly about him.

But Lu Chen only muttered: 'Those two big

cauldrons used to hold at least twenty gallons of river-water.'

One day his wife, as placid again in this house as she had ever been, showed him her new sateen coat, smoothing it over her great bosom. But he only stared at her. 'My mother,' he said heavily, 'once had a grey coat that was bound in silk.' And he fell to musing again.

No one could make him go out of the door. He sat day after day, his hair getting quite white and his lined face loosening from its former busy tenseness. His eyes, which had always been narrow and watchful and snapping, grew dull and hidden behind the veil of dimness that belongs to old people. Only the child sometimes beguiled him for a brief moment.

It was the child at last who beguiled him beyond the door. He had sat all through the shortening days of early winter, gazing out of the small window of his room. His day was marked off into the three periods of his meals; and at night he slept fitfully, sometimes still in his chair with his head on the table.

There came then, after a week of rain, one of the mild, deceptive days that are an interlude of autumn before the intense cold sets in. He had been conscious all morning of the soft, damp heat. The sun, shining obliquely through grey clouds, lighted up the landscape. He was restless, and he pushed open the window. The fresh smell of earth and moisture rose up. 'I could have caught a cauldronful of the rain-water,' he said, sniffing the dampness. Rain-water in the old days could be sold at a high price.

Just then the child came tugging at his hand. 'Out, out!' he cried, laughing. 'Come and play!'

Lu Chên felt a stirring in him. Well, he would go out just a little, perhaps. And, rising slowly, he took the

child's hand and went out. It was very warm, and the sun felt heartening to him. He straightened himself with an effort and began to walk towards some houses near by. He would just go and learn what news there might be. Not for a long time had he heard any. His son was busy all day, and, as for the women, who would talk with a woman ?

The child was chattering and a small cheeping of autumn insects filled the air. It was almost like spring. He looked about curiously. Where was he, exactly ? There was the North Gate yonder. Ah, that would be the end of the street where his shop had been. He would just go and look at it. Could he bear it ? He walked a little more quickly.

Then he turned a corner, and the street lay before him. The street ? What was this ? A great wide sweep of emptiness, straight through the heart of the city ! On all sides the same narrow, winding, dark streets and alleys that he had always known, and straight through them, like the clean swath of a sword-blade, this—this new road !

He stared along it, suddenly smitten with fright. Why, it was enormous—what would they ever do with a road like this ? The men working on it were like midges—like ants. All the people in the world could go up and down it and not jostle one another. There were people standing about, like himself, subdued and silent. Some poignancy in their expression drew his interest.

'You lived here ?' he hinted to a thin-faced man who stood near him.

The man nodded slowly. 'The house was all I had,' he said. 'A good house, built in the time of the Mings. It had ten rooms. I live in a hut now. You see, the house was all I had—I rented the rooms.'

Lu Chen nodded. 'I had a shop—a hot-water shop,' he said with difficulty. He would have liked to say more; it was on his tongue to say. 'There were two huge copper cauldrons.' But the man was not listening. He stood staring down the vast new roadway.

Some one drew near, and Lu Chen saw it was his son. The young man broke into a smile and came running. 'My father!' he cried. And then, 'Father, what do you think of it?'

The old man's lips trembled. He felt that he might either laugh or weep. 'It—looks as if a mighty storm had swept through the city,' he answered.

But the young man only laughed and said eagerly: 'See, father, this is my bit of the work. Look, at the side there will be pavements, and, in the middle, room for the electric cars and on both sides great space for vehicles of all sorts—room for everything! People from the whole world walking and riding on this road—the road through the new capital!' Some one called him, and he walked away, bustling a little.

Lu Chen stood still, gazing up the road. Infinitely wide, it stretched on both sides of him, infinitely long it extended into the distance. How far did it go, he asked himself solemnly. He had never seen anything in his life like it for space and straightness. Far at the other end, as far as his eyes could pierce, it went on and on, astounding, magnificent, new! Well, here was a thing. Not even emperors had made a road like this! He looked down at the little child beside him. This child, he supposed, would take the road for granted. The young always took things for granted—the way his son had taken the destruction of the shop, for instance. For the first time he did not use the word 'robbery' in his mind when he thought of his shop. Instead, this

question occurred to him: Had it taken this new road to make his son a man? He perceived that, as he had cared for his shop, so his son cared for the road. He continued to stand with the child, looking up it soberly, absorbed, pondering its import. This Revolution—this new road! Where did it lead?

FLOOD

BARREN SPRING

LIU, the farmer, sat at the door of his one-room house. It was a warm evening in late February, and in his thin body he felt the coming of spring. How he knew that the time had now come when sap should stir in trees and life begin to move in the soil he could not have told himself. In other years it would have been easy enough. He could have pointed to the willow-trees about the house and shown the swelling buds. But there were no more trees now. He had cut them off during the bitter winter when they were starving for food and he had sold them one by one. Or he might have pointed to the pink-tipped buds of his three peach-trees and his six apricot-trees that his father had planted in his day, so that now, being at the height of their time, they bore a load of fruit every year. But these trees were also gone. Most of all, in any other year than this, he might have pointed to his wheat-fields, where he planted wheat in the winter when the land was not needed for rice, and where, when spring was moving into summer, he planted the good rice, for rice was his chief crop. But the land told nothing this year. There was no wheat on it, for the flood had covered it long after wheat should have been planted, and it lay there cracked and like clay but newly dried.

Well, on such a day as this, if he had his buffalo and his plough as he had always had in other years, he would have gone out and ploughed up that cracked soil. He ached to plough it up and make it look like a field again, yes, even though he had not so much as one seed to put in it. But he had no buffalo. If any one had told him

that he would eat his own water-buffalo that ploughed the good land for him, and year after year pulled the stone roller over the grain and threshed it at harvest he would have called that man idiot. Yet it was what he had done. He had eaten his own water-buffalo, he and his wife and his parents and his four children, they had all eaten the buffalo together.

But what else could they do on that dark winter's day when the last of their store of grain was gone, when the trees were cut and sold, when he had sold everything, even the little they had saved from the flood, and there was nothing left except the rafters of the house they had and the garments they wore? Was there sense in stripping the coat off one's back to feed one's belly? Besides, the beast was starving also, since the water had covered even the grass lands, and they had had to go far afield to gather even enough grass for fuel to cook its bones and flesh. On that day when he had seen the faces of his old parents set as though dead, on that day when he had heard the crying of his children and seen his little daughter dying, such a despair had seized him as made him like a man without his reason, so that he had gathered together his feeble strength and he had done what he had said he never would: he had taken the kitchen knife and gone out and killed his own beast. When he did it, even in his despair, he groaned, for it was as though he killed his own brother. To him it was the last sacrifice.

Yet it was not enough. No, they grew hungry again and there was nothing left to kill. Many of the villagers went south to other places, or they went down the river to beg in the great cities. But he, Liu the farmer, had never begged. Moreover, it seemed to him then that they must all die and the only comfort left was to die

on their own land. His neighbour had come and begged him to set forth with them; yes, he had even said he would carry one of the old parents on his back so that Liu might carry the other, seeing that his own old father was already dead. But Liu had refused, and it was well, for in the next two days the old mother was dead, and if she had died on the way he could only have cast her by the roadside lest the others be delayed and more of them die. As it was he could put her safely into their own ground, although he had been so weak that it had taken him three days to dig a hole deep enough for her little old withered body. And then before he could get her buried he and his wife had quarrelled over the poor few clothes on the old body. His wife was a hard woman and she would have buried the old mother naked, if he had let her, so as to have the clothes for the children. But he made her leave on the inner coat and trousers, although they were only rags after all, and when he saw the cold earth against his old mother's flesh—well, that was sorrow for a man, but it could not be helped. Three more he had buried somehow—his old father and his baby daughter and the little boy who had never been strong.

That was what the winter's famine had taken from them. It would have taken them all except that in the great pools lying everywhere, which were left from the flood, there were shrimps, and these they had eaten raw and were still eating, although they were all sick with a dysentery that would not get well. In the last day or so his wife had crawled out and dug a few sprouting dandelions. But there was no fuel and so they also were eaten raw. But the bitterness was good after the tasteless flesh of the raw shrimps. Yes, spring was coming.

He sat on heavily, looking out over his land. If he had his buffalo back, if he had his plough that they had burned for fuel, he could plough the land. But when he thought of this, as he did many times every day, he felt helpless as a leaf tossed upon the flood. The buffalo was gone; gone also his plough and every implement of wood and bamboo, and what other had he? Sometimes in the winter he had felt grateful that at least the flood had not taken all the house as it had so many other houses. But now suddenly it came to him that he could be grateful for nothing, no, not even that he had his life left him and the life of his wife and the two older children. He felt tears come into his eyes slowly as they had not come even when he buried his old mother and saw the earth fall against her flesh, bared by the rags which had comforted him that day. But now he was comforted by nothing. He muttered to himself:

'I have no seed to plant in the land. There the land lies! I could go and claw it up with my hands if I had the seed and the land would bear. I know my good land. But I have no seed and the land is empty. Yes, even though spring comes, we must still starve!'

And he looked, hopeless, into the barren spring.

THE REFUGEES

THEY walked through the new capital, alien and from a far country, yes, although their own lands were only a few hundred miles perhaps from this very street upon which they now walked. But to them it was very far. Their eyes were the eyes of those who have been taken suddenly and by some unaccountable force from the world they have always known and always thought safe until this time. They who had been accustomed only to country roads and fields, walked now along the proud street of the new capital, their feet treading upon the new concrete sidewalk, and although the street was full of things they had never seen before, so that there were even automobiles and such things of which they had never even heard, still they looked at nothing, but passed as in a dream, seeing nothing.

There were several hundred of them passing at this moment. If they did not look at anything nor at any one, neither did any look at them. The city was full of refugees, many thousands of them, fed after a fashion, clothed somehow, sheltered in mats in great camps outside the city wall. At any hour of the day lines of ragged men and women and a few children could be seen making their way towards the camps, and if any city dweller noticed them it was to think with increased bitterness:

'More refugees—will there never be an end to them? We will all starve trying to feed them even a little!'

This bitterness, which is the bitterness of fear, made small shopkeepers bawl out rudely to the many beggars

who came hourly to beg at the doors, and it made men ruthless in paying small fares to the rickshaw pullers, of which there were ten times as many as could be used, because the refugees were trying to earn something thus. Even the usual pullers of rickshaws who followed this as their profession cursed the refugees because, being starving, they would pull for anything given them, and so fares were low for all, and all suffered. With the city full of refugees, then, begging at every door, swarming into every unskilled trade and service, lying dead on the streets at every frozen dawn, why should one look at this fresh horde coming in now at twilight of a winter's day?

But these were no common men and women, no riff-raff from some community always poor and easily starving in a flood time. No, these were men and women of which any nation might have been proud. It could be seen they were all from one region, for they wore garments woven out of the same dark blue cotton stuff, plain and cut in an old-fashioned way, the sleeves long and the coats long and full. The men wore smocked aprons, the smocking done in curious, intricate, beautiful designs. The women had bands of the same plain blue stuff wrapped like kerchiefs about their heads. Both men and women were tall and strong in frame, although the women's feet were bound. There were a few lads in the throng, a few children sitting in baskets slung upon a pole across the shoulders of their fathers, but there were no young girls, no young infants. Every man and every lad bore a burden on his shoulder. This burden was always bedding, quilts made of the blue cotton stuff and padded. Clothing and bedding were clean and strongly made. On top of every folded quilt with a bit of mat between was an iron cauldron. These

cauldrons had doubtless been taken from the earthen ovens of the village when the people saw the time had come when they must move. But in no basket was there a vestige of food, nor was there a trace of food having been cooked in them recently.

This lack of food was confirmed when one looked closely into the faces of the people. In the first glance in the twilight they seemed well enough, but when one looked more closely one saw they were the faces of people starving and moving now in despair to a last hope. They saw nothing of the strange sights of a new city because they were too near death to see anything. No new sight could move their curiosity. They were men and women who had stayed by their land until starvation drove them forth. Thus they passed unseeing, silent, alien, as those who know themselves dying are alien to the living.

The last one of this long procession of silent men and women was a little wizened old man. Even he carried a load of two baskets, slung on a pole on his shoulder, the same load of a folded quilt, a cauldron. But there was only one cauldron. In the other basket it seemed there was but a quilt, extremely ragged and patched, but clean still. Although the load was light it was too much for the old man. It was evident that in usual times he would be beyond the age of work, and was perhaps unaccustomed to such labour in recent years. His breath whistled as he staggered along, and he strained his eyes to watch those who were ahead of him lest he be left behind, and his old wrinkled face was set in a sort of gasping agony.

Suddenly he could go no more. He set his burden down with great gentleness and sank upon the ground, his head sunk between his knees, his eyes closed, panting

desperately. Starved as he was, a little blood rose in dark patches on his cheeks. A ragged vendor selling hot noodles set his stand near, and shouted his trade cry, and the light from the stand fell on the old man's drooping figure. A man passing stopped and muttered, looking at him :

'I swear I can give no more this day if I am to feed my own even nothing but noodles—but here is this old man. Well, I will give him the bit of silver I earned to-day against to-morrow and trust to to-morrow again. If my own old father had been alive I would have given it to him.'

He fumbled in himself and brought out of his ragged girdle a bit of a silver coin, and after a moment's hesitation and muttering, he added to it a copper penny.

'There, old father,' he said with a sort of bitter heartiness, 'let me see you eat noodles!'

The old man lifted his head slowly. When he saw the silver he would not put out his hand. He said :

'Sir, I did not beg of you. Sir, we have good land and we have never been starving like this before, having such good land. But this year the river rose and men starve even on good land at such times. Sir, we have no seed left, even. We have eaten our seed. I told them, we cannot eat the seed. But they were young and hungry and they ate it.'

'Take it,' said the man, and he dropped the money into the old man's smocked apron and went on his way, sighing.

The vendor prepared his bowl of noodles and called out :

'How many will you eat, old man?'

Then was the old man stirred. He felt eagerly in his

apron and when he saw the two coins there, the one copper and the other silver, he said :

'One small bowl is enough.'

'Can you eat only one small bowl, then ?' asked the vendor, astonished.

'It is not for me,' the old man answered.

The vendor stared astonished, but being a simple man he said no more but prepared the bowl, and when it was finished he called out, 'Here it is !' And he waited to see who would eat it.

Then the old man rose with a great effort and took the bowl between his shaking hands and he went to the other basket. There, while the vendor watched, the old man pulled aside the quilt until one could see the shrunken face of a small boy lying with his eyes fast closed. One would have said the child was dead except that when the old man lifted his head so his mouth could touch the edge of the little bowl he began to swallow feebly until the hot mixture was finished. The old man kept murmuring to him :

'There, my heart—there, my child——'

'Your grandson ?' said the vendor.

'Yes,' said the old man. 'The son of my only son. Both my son and his wife were drowned as they worked on our land when the dikes broke.'

He covered the child tenderly and then, squatting on his haunches, he ran his tongue carefully around the little bowl and removed the last trace of food. Then, as though he had been fed, he handed the bowl back to the vendor.

'But you have the silver bit !' cried the ragged vendor, yet more astonished when he saw the old man ordered no more.

The old man shook his head. 'That is for seed,' he

replied. 'As soon as I saw it, I knew I would buy seed with it. They ate up all the seed, and with what shall the land be sown again?'

'If I were not so poor myself,' said the vendor, 'I might even have given you a bowl. But to give something to a man who has a bit of silver——' He shook his head, puzzled.

'I do not ask you, brother,' said the old man. 'Well I know you cannot understand. But if you had land you would know it must be put to seed again or there will be starvation yet another year. The best I can do for this grandson of mine is to buy a little seed for the land—yes, even though I die, and others must plant it, the land must be put to seed.'

He took up his load again, his old legs trembling, and straining his eyes down the long, straight street, he staggered on.

FATHERS AND MOTHERS

ON this edge of dry land, which rises out of the flood stretching from horizon to horizon, there are little heaps of what appear to be wreckage. Each heap has a few wooden benches, a rude table, a little cupboard, a small iron cauldron set upon a hollowed clay base which is blackened with smoke. But the cauldrons are cold and have been cold for weeks, for there is no fuel to burn beneath them. The flood has taken everything.

Each of these heaps is all that is left of a home and a farm-house. The rest lies under the flood, where lie also the harvests which were planted and never reaped. About every such heap of salvage clusters a group of human beings, a man, a woman, and children, and perhaps an old man or woman, but of these there are not many. For the most part, the groups are fathers and mothers and their children. There is a sort of subdued quarrel going on between these fathers and mothers, or else there is a dreadful silence. What is this quarrel ?

Here is a father, a young farmer casting surly looks at his young wife. They must have married very young because, although all these five children are theirs, the eldest child is not more than eight, and the father is not more than twenty-six or seven, and the mother younger. The father is strong and brown, albeit very thin now. But he is such a man as one sees anywhere in a countryside, a man who loves his land and takes pride in his good ploughed fields and in his heaps of yellow grain and in all his good produce. He takes pride in it all because it is the fruit of his labour and he is proud to be thrifty

and able. He has a grave, somewhat hard face, but it is a good face, even now when it is surly ; and the eyes are honest, though full of despair.

The mother does not look at him except secretly, and then she turns quickly away. She has been a pretty, round-cheeked country maid, and her feet are unbound, and her whole body, if it were not so thin now, would be well-shaped and strong. But her eyes are sunken and her black hair is rusty and tousled by the wind, for she has not combed it for many days. Her lips are dry and grey, although she constantly passes her tongue over them to wet them.

She is very busy. She is watching the children continually. Two of them never leave her. One is at her breast, which is now but a poor, shrivelled bit of skin. Yet the little pale creature she holds to her is comforted by it even though it is empty, and moans a little more softly for a time. The other child is a little girl, two years old, a small, shrunken creature who remains perfectly silent and motionless in the mother's arm. The other three children do not move much, but when one of them creeps away a little, or goes near the water's edge, the mother cries out and is not satisfied until she has every child within reach of her hands.

Especially is she restless thus at night. She sleeps almost none at all, and she has all of the children about her. A score of times she wakes out of her doze and passes her hands quickly over the children. Are they all there—the five of them ? Where is the other girl ? Yes—here she is—they are here. If the father so much as moves she calls out sharply :

'What are you doing—what is wrong ?'

Sometimes the father breaks into a bitter curse on her. She knows why he curses her. She does not

answer a word. She only keeps the children by her and counts them over and over in the darkness.

When morning comes she tries to make a bustle as though she had much food to prepare. She dips up some of the cold river water and mixes it in a gourd with a little of the flour they have left. She tries to say cheerfully:

'There is really more flour left than I thought. There is enough to last us for many days.'

She manages so that the largest portion goes to the father, and she hushes the clamouring of the two older boys in a sort of terror, glancing again and again at the man, who stares at them all sombrely and says nothing. Her own share is least of all, although she makes a loud supping over it. If she can she takes nothing, pretending that she is not hungry, that she has an inward pain. If she can seize a moment when the man's back is turned, she feeds the two little ones hastily and secretly.

But the father is not deceived. He roars at her if he sees what she has done and he cries:

'I will not let you starve even that one of these shall live!'

He is not satisfied until he sees her hold her bowl to her lips. She takes the sups small and mincing, to make it seem more.

But in spite of all her contriving the man knows how small their store is, and how the children clamour for food. They will not always heed their mother's hushing, and the two boys sometimes break into wailing. They were stout and rosy once and had always all they needed to eat, and they do not understand how it is that the water has come and covered over the land like this, and to them it seems their father must think of a way.

He goes and sits by the water's edge then, and holds his hands over his ears while his sons wail. It is at such times that the mother's face is fixed in its terror, and she beseeches her sons, whispering to them :

'Do not make your father hopeless. Be still—be still!'

Seeing her face, they are frightened into silence, sensing danger, but not knowing what danger.

Thus the silent, dreadful quarrel goes on between the father and mother. Every day the flour is less in the basket, and the flood does not recede. Every night the mother counts her children in the darkness.

But she cannot go sleepless for ever. There comes a night when her starved body sleeps and she does not know it. She has her arms outspread over the children. But she does not know it when the father stirs and whispers to the two little silent girls. They follow him trustingly to a little distance. He comes stumbling back after a while, alone, and lies down in the darkness. Once or twice he sighs heavily, and each sigh comes from him like a groan.

In the grey dawn the mother wakes suddenly. She is in terror, realizing even before she wakes that she has been asleep. Her hands fumble over the children—where are the other two ? She screams and leaps to her feet, suddenly strong. She rushes to her husband, seizes him, shrieks at him :

'Where are the two children ?'

He is sitting crouched on the ground, his knees drawn up, his head upon his knees. He does not answer.

The mother is beside herself. She is weeping wildly and she shakes the man by the shoulder and screams at him :

'I am their mother—I am their mother!'

Her screaming wakes every one in that wretched encampment. But there is no sound of a voice. Every one knows what this quarrel is. There has been this quarrel everywhere. The mother breaks into dreadful moans, and she gasps out:

'Could a mother ever have done such a thing—it is only fathers who do not love their children, who begrudge them a little food!'

Only then does the sullen man speak. He lifts his head from his knees and looks at the woman in the grey dawn and he mutters:

'Do you think I did not love them?' He turns his head away and after a while he says again: 'They are finished their starving!' He weeps suddenly and noiselessly, and seeing his twisted face, even the mother falls silent.

THE GOOD RIVER

ALL her life Lan Ying had lived by the river with her father and her mother and her three younger brothers. The good river, they called it, because the river helped them in many ways, although its name was Yangtse, or Son of the Sea. In the spring the river brought swelling tides down from the snow melting on a hundred mountains, where was its source. Many an hour had Lan Ying wondered about that source as she sat watching the fish-net for her father. The river ran so wide and deep and yellow here at her feet, below the great net spread out on bamboo poles, that it seemed impossible to believe that it was ever a small stream somewhere, tumbling down some rocky cliff, or running small and sluggish through some sandy desert. The only way she could realize it was to think of her baby brother, newly born three years ago, how small he was and how different from a man, and yet he, too, would grow out of that smallness, even as the river did, until it was so great it could be called truly a Son of the Sea.

Sitting by the fish-net and waiting patiently until it was time to pull the rope that lifted it again, Lan Ying stared across the river. She could see the opposite shore only as a line of clear green. On misty mornings she could not see it at all, and she might have been sitting beside a muddy ocean. Nearly all her days did Lan Ying sit here beside the great river, and it had come now to mean something like a person to her. Her father was not a fisherman, but a farmer, and he planted rice and wheat on his land that edged the river and ran back inland an acre or two to the hillock where the hamlet

bobbing up and down on the water. There was always something to see. As for the boats, there was every kind, from small fishing-sculls to the sailed junks with their painted eyes staring out at her from their bows. Once in many days low-set foreign craft came by and sometimes smoking steamers. She hated these and the river hated them, too. It always swelled into angry waves and rocked back and forth as they passed. Sometimes waves grew so high that the little fishing-boats almost capsized, and the fishermen shouted loud curses at these foreign ships. Seeing the river angry like this, Lan Ying was angry, too, and ran out to hold her net steady. Still, oftentimes, after these steamers passed there would be fish in her net, frightened there into commotion, and Lan Ying, when she saw the big silver bodies flopping in the bottom of the net, gave thanks to the river in her heart for sending her the big fish. It was a good river. It brought them food from the land and meat from its waters, and to Lan Ying, whose life was there beside it, it came to mean something like a god, and staring out over it day after day, she could read its face and catch its mood for the day.

It was, indeed, the only book she could read, for she did not dream of going to school. In their hamlet there was no school, but she knew very well what a school was, because in the market town to which she and her mother went once a year there was a school. There were no pupils there on that day, for it was fair-day, and school was out for the day, but she used to look curiously into the empty room as she passed, and see the empty seats and the tables, and pictures hung on the wall. The first time she had asked her mother:

'And what is it they do there?'

To this her mother said: 'They learn the books there.'

was, where they lived with half a dozen or so other families. They were all families of farmers like Lan Ying's father, but they all had nets tended, too, by children or by old grandfathers who had grown too old to work any more in the fields. Fish brought them in the extra pennies they could spend for the various holidays and for incense to burn before the gods, and for new clothes sometimes, and, besides, all this fish was good meat to eat, as well.

Lan Ying rose suddenly from the low little bamboo stool where she sat, and pulled with all her might at the rope. Up came the net slowly. Many a time there was nothing in it. Sometimes there were tiny fish that she had to scoop up with a long-handled dipper. Sometimes there was a big fish, once in several days or so. But there was none now, only a flash of tiny minnows. She stooped and dipped them up. Her mother would pin each one by a sliver of bamboo to a bit of matting on a board and dry them in the sun and then they were salted and very good to eat with morning rice. She let the net down slowly and sat down once more.

Sometimes the days were very long sitting here alone. She came just after her breakfast and sat until noon, when she could go home again. But she liked it better than the other things the children must do on the river farms. She liked it better than herding the buffalo and sitting astride its hard and hairy back all day, as her second brother did. She liked it better than herding the ducks in the little inlets from the river, as her eldest brother did. Yes, she liked it because there was something very companionable about the moving river, about the boats that passed by her there, and the coveys of wild-duck that floated down sometimes, great flocks of them, carried askew by the currents, and